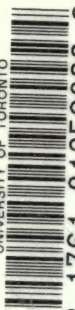


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THE ROMANCE *OF* *A HUNDRED YEARS.*

REMARKABLE CHAPTERS IN THE SOCIAL AND PUBLIC
LIFE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

With Illustrations.

BY
ALFRED KINGSTON,

AUTHOR OF

“East Anglia and the Great Civil War,” “Fragments of Two Centuries,”
&c., &c.

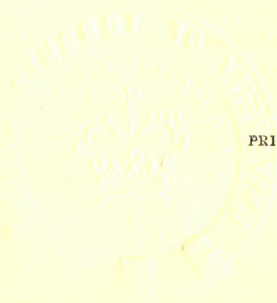
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PREFACE.

IT was the lot of our grandfathers to pass away just when great issues were pending, and of our fathers to be born in one world and to die in another, so great has been the contrast between the opening and the close of a single lifetime. We who with grateful hearts have closed the eyes of the nineteenth century, may console ourselves with the thought that whatever the new century may have in store, the application of steam and electricity has for ever taken away much of the elements of surprise and sharp contrast in which the past hundred years have been so fruitful to our fathers.

In the following pages I have aimed, not so much at a study of nineteenth-century life and progress, as to give a setting to some of the more striking elements of contrast which have been brought into such bold relief. "The Peasants' Rising after Waterloo" has, however, a character of its own, and, as one of the most curious little tragicomedies in all our history, may perhaps deserve the prominence given to it. Where not otherwise indicated, the authorities used have been county and parochial documents, broadsides, etc., in the British Museum Library, contemporary newspapers, and old men's memories. With such materials no claim can be made to originality; it is enough if some small service has been rendered in preserving old landmarks, and those starting-points of later developments the character of which should go far towards justifying the title I have given to this book.

ALFRED KINGSTON.

December 31, 1900.

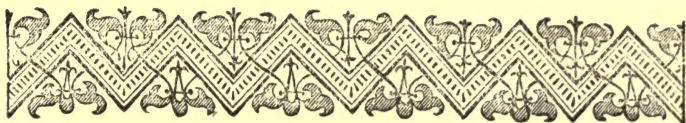
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ROMANCE OF A HUNDRED YEARS.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION—WAITING FOR THE DAWN.

“ I hear the muffled tramp of years
Come stealing up the slope of time ;
They bear a train of smiles and tears,
Of burning hopes and dreams sublime.”

WITH the romance of a hundred years the cup of the nineteenth century is full to the brim. I am assuming, as I think everyone may, that we are now, in the closing days of the year 1900, near the portals of the two centuries, at which we shall let in the new century, and bid the old withdraw behind the eternal barrier, which, once shut, no man can open. It cannot now be proved how the first year of the Christian era of A.D. was counted, but it seems inconceivable that when the era of B.C. expired at the birth of Christ, there was a year nothing, as there must have been, in order that the new century may begin at the beginning instead of the end of the hundredth year, with the nought instead of one. In the absence of such proof, common-sense must be

sufficient warrant for requiring the full tale of a hundred completed years, and not simply 99, to complete the century. At any rate, this view was generally accepted at the end of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though in the discussions of the time, learned pedantry here and there stood out for the sacredness of the outer shell of things rather than for their inward life and meaning. At the close of the nineteenth century we may therefore cherish the old associations, and, gathering up the golden threads upon which have been strung its notable recollections, take leave of the retiring century by tracing some of the romance which this fruitful era has showered upon England and upon the world. That these hundred years make up a really 'wonderful century,' the life of to-day bears eloquent testimony at almost every point of its continued growth, where you may see by contrast that the romance scattered along the way our fathers trod has been a part of its very trials as well as of its ultimate triumphs.

As with individual human lives, so with nations and with epochs, the play of romance belongs to the morning of life, and for the play of romantic elements out of which sprang the birth-hours of the marvellous transformation which the nineteenth century has witnessed, you must look through the darkness which enshrouded the dawn of these pregnant, spacious, and fertile one hundred years. The opening of the gates of the nineteenth century was anything but a cheering experience to those who lived a hundred years ago. The birth of the century was a puny one, without much promise of the lusty, vigorous growth which was to follow. A great bank of cloud, like sullen mists succeeding the storms of a lurid night, lay across the pathway of the coming century, through which no ray of the dawn could penetrate, and in which the only figures visible were the gaunt figures of famine, hunger, and despair. But the blackness and hopelessness of the dawn

heighten for us the strange period of romantic contrasts which was to be unfolded for the English people ere the century had reached its noontide—a period which has had no equal in all our history. The last years of the eighteenth century had brought with them dramatic upheavals in which the dreams of a new world became hallucinations, ideals became ogres, and hope herself but a phantom. The ‘good old times’ of the Georgian era is a very fair description, with the slight correction of substituting ‘bad’ for ‘good’: for the reign of the Jubilee monarch, George III, had brought the English people thirty-seven years of war to twenty-three years of peace, with such consolations as military glory in foreign wars could bring to the people of England for their heavy humdrum grind along the deep ruts in which the domestic and social life of the people was toiling upwards to the light. When, at last, a dazzling ray of hope came, it was but for a moment, and the dream of the philosophers soon “descended from the moral heights,” until France found, and England and other nations looking on, saw, the “dream of liberty tightening down into that hideous nightmare and saddest of all tyrannies, the tyranny of the multitude,” in which

“The brute despair of trampled centuries
Leaped up with one hoarse yell and snapped its bands ;
Groped for its right with horny, callous hands,
And stared around for God with blood-shot eyes !”

What wonder if those palms, as Lowell says, were “all too hard for nice distinctions” ; and that the ideal was dragged down into the coarser elements of the national life, until men “fought for the new life with the old weapons.” “It would,” as I have written elsewhere, “be a total misapprehension of the great throbbing thought of better days to come which stirred the sluggish life of the expiring century to assume, as we often do, that the cry of ‘Liberty,

Equality, and Fraternity' was merely the cry of the French, driven to desperation by the gulf between the nobility and the people. In truth, almost the whole Western world was affected by the unfolding of a great drama, and the infection of it penetrated almost into every corner of England." How the aspiration of Rousseau and the philosophers after universal brotherhood "literally turned the heads" of many of the most gifted young men in England, Wordsworth, then a student at Cambridge, has told us with the "fine frenzy" of the poet—

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!"

Prophetic harps "in every grove were ringing war shall cease," and, in short, the millennium was very near at hand! But Wordsworth, who actually went over to France to "stand by the cradle of liberty," found to his dismay that

"The glorious opening, the unlooked-for dawn
That promised everlasting joy to France!"

was an opening into the abyss of a human volcano, and he came back disenchanted. But the "baptism of democracy" and the "extreme unction day of feudalism" presented themselves in very different ways in the two countries. In France the dream of a new world which was to contain nothing but liberty, equality, fraternity, left no place for the past. All tradition was straightway abolished; the bridge of history, though it held out for a time in the person of Louis XVI, had to go as soon as the "extinguisher caught fire," when the soldiers joined the mob; and, with the fall of the Bastille, it was realized with terrible misgivings in many quarters of Europe that the "extreme unction day of feudalism" had indeed almost come. The English people, thinking in their old, practical way, not

only of what was desirable but how it was to be done, held on by their conservative instincts to the bridge of history, and preferred not to burn their ships at the first glimpse of the land of promise ; and so, while France "passed through liberty" at the flood, only to retrace her steps through that reign of terror in footprints of blood, England only experienced "a wetting of the spray."

In England, at the dawn of the nineteenth century, the great drama of the French Revolution had left its mark upon two extreme classes of Society—upon the few ardent sympathizers with the principles of the Revolution in its quickening of the power of the people towards the sentiment of a national life, and upon those who, confounding these principles with the results as worked out in practice in France, cordially hated both. The reforming spirit of the first of these classes had sometimes found expression in the old book clubs and debating societies, and as the members of these clubs "were credited with holding what at the time were called dangerous principles," the meetings caused some little excitement. "Whether free inquiry is not upon the whole beneficial to Society, though it may be attended with some ill effects to individuals?"—"Has the State any right to take cognizance of any opinions whatever, either civil, political, or religious?"—these were the abstract principles bordering on politics which the old debaters of the Forum discussed. "The region of practical politics for many of the coming questions was yet half a century off"; and so they turned their attention to the mental exercise of debating abstract questions of "high philosophy and of morals." As for the other extreme class, they were to be found in the old constitutional three-deckers who so handsomely abused Tom Paine. Their outlook towards the new century might be summed up in the doggerel parody of "God Save the King" which occurs in one of the many contemporary broadsides preserved in the British Museum Library—

“Hence let reformers fly,
Let serpent faction die,
And trade increase.
French follies make us wise,
And, like true Britons, prize
Roast beef and peace !”

Occasionally these opposite extremes did get translated into more or less definite acts—public acts of daily life—and then the results as we read them to-day are suggestive of the long way we have travelled in these hundred years.

In the month of July, 1796, there was issued from the city of Norwich this significant announcement: “The friends of freedom at Norwich are requested to meet at the Rose Tavern, on Thursday, 14th of July, in order to commemorate the destruction of the Bastille, and the consequent emancipation of twenty-four millions of men. Dinner on the table at three o’clock.” On the appointed day there gathered of the “friends of freedom” a very respectable assembly at the Tavern to celebrate the anniversary of the destruction of the Bastille, and the day was spent with “the utmost harmony, spirit, and conviviality,” says the old chronicle of the time. The toast-list might have emanated from the eloquent Girondists of the Revolution themselves. “Immortal honour to those brave men whose hands destroyed that detestable dungeon the Bastille!” “May every building in every corner of the world that is converted into a Bastille meet its fate!” “A speedy peace with the Republic of France!” “The American Republic!” “The Abolition of the Slave Trade!” “The Rights of Man!” “May the period soon arrive when the nations of the earth shall refuse to cut each other’s throats to gratify a few interested individuals!” “May anarchy and slavery, terrorism, and despotism be held in equal detestation, in whatever form they appear!” “The patriots under persecution in every quarter of the

globe!" "The memorable day which gave trial by jury to twenty-four millions of men!" "The liberty of the Press, the great bulwark of liberty and source of morals!"

In the evening the "friends of freedom" left their cups and their pipes, and, reinforced by others to the number of 400, crowded into the lecture-room, where, and to an overflow meeting in the yard, Mr. Thelwall, a redoubtable champion of the "dangerous principles" embodied in the toast-list, held forth on the causes of the French Revolution, for which let him answer next time he comes to Norwich to a very different audience. Those who stood at the opposite pole to Mr. Thelwall and the "friends of freedom" were very outspoken in throwing at them the taunts of "Jacobin"—a party in the Revolution which, to do them justice, they never followed—but beyond nicknames in the street they would have come to no harm if the soldiers and sailors had not come upon the scene. At Great Yarmouth the sailors from one of the ships in harbour, encouraged by the example of some officers, marched to the lecture-hall in which Mr. Thelwall was to lecture on the French Revolution, put out the lights and set to work to beat "better principles" into all and sundry, but failed in their design to get hold of the lecturer and carry him to their ship in the harbour. At Norwich, soon after this, the soldiers invaded Mr. Thelwall's lecture-room, broke up the furniture, and went to the reformers' rendezvous at the "Rose" and broke the windows.

While ardent reformers were thus dreaming of the millennium without any practical method of reaching it, the general public were being drilled and dragooned into loyalty to the King and Constitution, by officers in garrison towns, in taverns and theatres, and by every recruiting sergeant in country fairs, and occasionally someone dared to resent this interference with personal liberty. The same thing was happening more or less all over the country, but here are three typical examples from the Eastern Counties,

where men, even at that time, sometimes had the courage of their convictions.

In the front row of the dress circle of the old theatre at King's Lynn, watching the play, sat a well-dressed townsman, Mr. Curtis, among his neighbours, and close by him some military officers, Major Partridge and Captain Powlett, aide-de-camp to General Meadows. When the performers were "chanting the loyal anthem of God save the King," Mr. Curtis kept his seat, and Major Partridge commanded him, "in language not perfectly congenial with the habits of a gentleman, to rise from his seat and pull off his hat." As Mr. Curtis took no notice of the command, the gallant Major proceeded to enforce it. While the Major was holding on to Mr. Curtis, and Mr. Curtis "held the Major by his proboscis," Captain Powlett enforced the loyal command by thrashing Mr. Curtis, and the two sons of Mars threatened to throw the obdurate citizen of Lynn over into the pit, for which let them also answer at the next Quarter Sessions for the borough.

About the same time on Saturday, the Norwich Theatre presented a similar scene of "confusion, loyalty, and bloody noses," occasioned by officers there "insisting on the audience hearing the song of God save the King with hats off." But a city that could unanimously ask the King to dismiss his Ministers was made of sterner stuff than to care about a sham demonstration, and as "the command did not suit the disposition of the people" a general scuffle ensued. The officers, beaten at their own game of bluff, were routed, and "fled to their barracks and quarters for protection."

If this kind of thing happened in the green tree, what was to be expected in the dry? If men of education holding the rank of officers took so much into their own hands, it is not surprising that the recruiting sergeant was a little king on every village green or at the country fair. At the midsummer fair at Royston, on the borders of

Hertfordshire, the recruiting sergeants went one better than the officers at King's Lynn and Norwich. These brave sons of Mars had been "parading the town with a flag and playing 'God Save the King,'" and had got a fair crowd of people around them. At that moment a young man and two young women, returning from the fair to a neighbouring village in a tilted cart, were stopped by the crowd. The young man, having thought more of Bacchus than Mars, whipped his horse and attempted to drive through the crowd. A musket was let off, the horse reared and plunged, the young man lashed round with his whip and struck someone in the crowd. This aroused the martial ardour of the sons of Mars, who drew their swords and thrust them through the tilt of the cart! The young women were carried away fainting, and the brave sergeants drove home the attack by despatching the frightened horse with their swords. A tradesman "of unsuspected loyalty," standing by, apparently demurred to so much slaughter, and was turned upon by one of the sergeants and challenged—"Say 'God save the King,' or I'll run you through with my sword!" But the other replied, "with the spirit of a Briton": "You may stab me if you dare, but no man shall make me say 'God save the King,' only when I please!"

Two notable facts which intensified the conflict between reforming individuals and the official *status quo*, had been the mobbing of his Majesty George III on his way to and from Parliament on the one hand, and the burning of Dr. Priestly's house and library by the Birmingham mob on the other hand. While the recruiting sergeant had been driving up an effusive loyalty to the King, Pitt's two measures—"An Act for the safety of his Majesty's person and Government against treasonable and seditious practices," and "An Act to prevent seditious assemblages"—had, by putting the extinguisher on all aspirations for reform, roused a feeling of fear and suspicion amongst the

people. In Pitt's own constituency at the University of Cambridge, which he represented during his long and distinguished Premiership, these two conflicting sentiments came into prominence in a rather striking fashion. The High Sheriff of the county had called a meeting at the Shire Hall. It was adjourned to the Senate House, where University, town, and county assembled. The object had been to present an address to the King upon the alarming "outrage committed upon his person in his passage to and from Parliament," and to congratulate his Majesty upon his escape. The Earl of Hardwicke proposed the motion for the address, with the personal part of which everyone agreed; but the reforming party present, led by Mr. Brand, ancestor of Speaker Brand of a later day, desired also to show their abhorrence of the two Bills before Parliament, and proposed an addition to the address to that effect. Mr. Henry Gunning, the Esquire Beadle of the University, supported the amendment in a stirring speech, which elicited from the Earl of Hardwicke this remarkable statement in defence of the Bills, that "from the example in France, political clubs were incompatible with the safety of the State." The populace shouted, "No new French laws, but the laws of old England"; and Mr. Randall, a reforming orator, in a catalogue of the rights of the people, poured forth the "soul of a Briton" in the peroration—"These, gentlemen, are and ever shall be your rights, so help me God." The putting of the motion and amendment led to a scene of great confusion in the old historic hall. The first division was challenged, and then the Sheriff bade them all divide to the right and the left, and again declared that the majority was for the original motion.

That this opposition should have been imported into a personal address to the Sovereign may be understood from the chief provision of the Bills—"No lecture, debate or discussion upon the subject of the Government or Constitution can be given without a licence from two

Justices, under a penalty of £100, and the place and persons being punished as disorderly." Resistance to the power of arrest was punishable by death. Pitt, on visiting his constituency at the Cambridge University shortly afterwards, was, if we may trust a partisan newspaper of the time, hissed as he got into his carriage with the Bishop of Lincoln on leaving the University, and was credited with the remark to the Bishop, "Half of them don't know what they are hissing about."

Norwich was unanimous in calling for the dismissal of his Majesty's Ministers, and many other towns in the country petitioned against the Bills. Under such omens, the glory of the old *régime* for the moment seemed to be on the wane, but the dawn of a brighter day for King, Parliament, and people was still in the distance.





CHAPTER II.

MEMORABLE YEARS OF SCARCITY AND WAR.

IN the midst of the conflict for preserving the outward shell of Government and asserting the liberty of the people, the latter were crying for bread. Out of this strange conflict—a weak reflection of what had happened across the Channel in the first stages of the French Revolution—the dull, heavy, officially-hardened life of the eighteenth century, with the people's cry for bread ringing in its ears, passed into the shadow of the night in which a more wonderful century was struggling for its birth. The official life of the nation had seen trials enough, and only three years before the century closed a strain upon its resources had broken the back of public credit. "Inexpressible was the consternation diffused through the Metropolis in consequence of the intelligence that no more cash was to be issued at the Bank of England. Multitudes were seen instantly pouring in to present their notes for payment; no cash, however, was to be procured, and the only offer made was that of small notes in lieu of larger ones." Meetings were held all over the country, in almost every important town. At these meetings, the "tendency to exaggerated public credit" was considered, and resolutions were passed pledging those assembled that, "as

the bankers of the country cannot get their specie back from the Bank of England," all persons dealing with the local banks be recommended to accept their notes for payment, to deposit what gold they could spare, and not to withdraw their cash only for the ordinary course of business."

The sufferings of the poor were aggravated by severe Winters and by a disastrous run of bad seasons. Prices of the necessities of life rose to an alarming height, and continued to rise. Those who could keep corn for the rising market reaped their reward, not alone in extraordinary prices, but also in a storm of popular indignation against both farmers and corn-dealers, and especially the latter class. In some cases farmers were threatened or actually had their stacks of precious grain burned, because it was alleged that they had created an "artificial scarcity," while the corn-dealers were regarded as enemies of the human race. The promise of a bountiful harvest for the year 1800 was entirely changed by floods and constant rain on the edge of harvest, into the "dismal reality of renewed and continued scarcity." In October barley was raked out of the water in the lowlands and carried to higher ground to dry. It was carted to the stack on the following January, and in the Spring sold for 70s. a quarter! Corn and other necessities reached famine prices. Wheat in Mark Lane once reached the extravagant price of 184s. a quarter, and for about four weeks bread sold for 1s. 10½d. the quartern loaf, the price of about five loaves to-day. Parliament passed various Acts for economizing the supply of wheat flour—e.g. the Brown Bread Act, under which a baker was forbidden to sell bread that was not made from whole meal; while another imposed a penalty for selling bread before it had been baked for twenty-four hours. If the rich had to submit to sumptuary laws of this kind for the common good, what must have been the condition of the poor? No wonder that far into the sixties and the

seventies old men's memories were charged with the recollection of "barley bread as black as your hat," which was often a bare necessity for the poor.

The official machinery for fixing the price of bread and flour was but a soulless automaton, moved by men who were willing to put their money in the slot for the corn at every succeeding market day, and thereby turned the wheel to the figure which became the fixed price until another market day came round. In other words, the returns of prices for corn at one market fixed the official price at which the miller and baker could sell their flour and bread to the poor, until the returns of a succeeding market modified the prices once more. As the machinery worked independently in different local centres there was no uniformity over any considerable area, and the middlemen could always forestall the market and create a 'corner' in wheat—the most precious commodity—and in this way what was intended as a protection often became a misfortune for the poor. Remarkable instances of this occurred in the West of England. On Saturday the 26th of July wheat sold at Warminster market at £3 per quarter less than on Saturday the 12th. The week following the 26th, "the opulent flourmen were very industrious in forestalling the next market by buying at all farmhouses at the price of last week, and concerting to rise the next, which they did effectively by assembling from the Eastern parts of the county of Somersetshire and other places, and voluntarily giving advanced prices, thereby raising the return of Saturday, 2nd (August), 16s. per quarter (namely, 112s. to 128s. per quarter), although the returns of every other market the same week were very much on the decline. On Monday, August 4th, bread and flour were advanced for many miles round, according to the return of prices at Warminster on Saturday, the 2nd; the wealthy millers, having monopolised large stores, used every possible means of keeping up prices."

The following curious entry in a Parish Book for Great Chishall may be worth quoting in this connection :—
“Great quantiteys of wht Brot in from furen parts and very Much damag’d, and thrown into the Thames, and notwithstanding this great price of corn very much was found horded Up in this kingdom of Many persons, that in the end of this Deartimes it almost had the appearance of an Artificiall Fammin.”

After such experiences it gradually dawned upon the popular mind that if prices were to be fixed at all by a common standard, why not by the standard of necessity and of what the scant wages of the poor would buy? This view of the situation, though not being quite practicable, was tried to a sufficient extent to fairly stagger the official mind and set them treaty-making in some cases. There had been serious riots at Nottingham, but with the completion of harvest the tumults quieted down, upon the farmers “subscribing to a paper by which they bind themselves to bring their wheat to market with all possible dispatch,” and agreed to charge £4 instead of £7 per quarter. At Chesterfield a body of miners caused a riot by “fixing a maximum upon every marketable article.” But even the Chesterfield miners might very well acknowledge that

“Women alone, when in the streets they jar,
Perhaps excel us in the wordy war.”

At Ipswich market, at any rate, on a Saturday in September, 1800, “a farmer having, it was said, resisted £3 10s. per coomb for a sample of wheat of this year’s growth, came to the knowledge of some women, who collected themselves together, and, forming a line on each side of the street through which he had to pass, assailed him in such a volley of abuse that it precipitated his departure. Happily, no other weapons were employed than their tongues, so he quitted the town in safety, and the tumult subsided without

any mischief." At Cambridge market in the same month, if not on the same day, there was "an appearance of riot" owing to the high price of corn, which brought a posse of magistrates and constables on the scene; the Loyal Association of Volunteers and many of the principal inhabitants were sworn in as special constables, but on the other hand the Corporation passed resolutions to "prosecute forestallers and regraters," for which purpose the University voted £200. On the same Saturday of discontent there was "considerable interruption" in the Norwich market, when "some women illegally forced the country butchers to sell their meat at 4*d.*, but by the prompt attention of the magistrates and constables no serious evil consequences ensued." The disturbances extended to the very shadow of Windsor Castle itself, where Mr. Phillips, the royal baker to George III, "was compelled to give all the bread in his shop to save the house from destruction, and the mob proceeded to Clewer Mills, when they were dispersed by the soldiers." An eminent corn-factor of Mark Lane was tried at the King's Bench for buying oats by sample and selling again in the same market. The jury found him guilty, and the Judge said: "You have conferred, by your verdict, almost the greatest benefit on your country that was ever conferred by any jury."

It was a great event when the newspapers could at last announce "perfect tranquillity" in the Metropolis, at Mark Lane and elsewhere, though the precaution had even then been taken to have a corps of Volunteers in readiness for emergencies. "So scarce was good flour," says an old newspaper for 1800, "that a miller of Chesterton was tempted to take the good flour out of a poor woman's grist from gleanings, and give her refuse wheat and barley instead, for which he was hauled up before the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge and compelled to return the good flour to the poor woman." At Norwich,

a miller was convicted and paid the full penalty for not giving a true account of the wheat and flour he had bought, and for refusing to be examined on oath as required by Act of Parliament.

On the other hand, the sufferings of the poor with the growing scarcity and high prices were regarded, even by many of those interested in the trade, as a calamity, and market correspondents wrote in strains of pity: "We are sorry to announce a further advance of 4s. per sack of flour since our last report, from 98s. to 102s. per sack, and the quartern loaf from 1s. 4d. to 1s. 4½d." As the price continued to rise beyond the means of the people, the consoling theory was at last put forward that "the very dearness must lessen consumption," a theory which lost sight of the hard fact "that the poor must have bread—their first and last subsistence." Parliament, by offering bounties, practically guaranteed to every person importing foreign wheat a price of 100s. per quarter, but there was only too little to be had even on these terms, and all classes suffered. The man who 'farmed' the paupers in the old parochial workhouse, and proprietors of 'Academies,' or boarding-schools, pleaded to be released from their contracts, or to be granted compensation, while "the King on his throne found the Civil List insufficient, even with that Spartan order adopted by his Majesty George III, that the bread of his household was to be made of meal and rye mixed, and that the Royal Family were to eat the same bread as their servants."

Statements in Parliament that the "farmers were making 200 per cent. profit" were backed by local vestries in rural districts, to this extent, that they recommended the farmers "to allow their labourers such wages as may prevent them from becoming chargeable to the parish." The farmers, some of whom for the moment may have had little corn to sell, did not very readily respond, and the official conscience stepped in with its emergency policy of making up the

wages to a standard of subsistence—a policy which was designed to demoralize the people under the whole Poor Law a few years later. All farmers were not alike, however, for one of them sympathetically wrote:—"I am truly concerned to inform you that the price of grain advances every succeeding market day, and there is no prospect whatever of a fall. Wheat 23s. to 25s. per bushel! A number of principal farmers had agreed to sell their wheat at 21s. per bushel. Not long adhered to, for while I and others were selling at that price, others were getting 28s., and so the matter dropped. Price of bread now almost out of reach of the poor; we have subscribed to purchase butchers' meat and potatoes for distribution, leaving them to buy bread with the money received from the parish."

Another farmer in sympathy with the poor was John Carrington, of Bramfield, a Hertfordshire Pepys, whose diary contains many curious entries, and one, which must have warmed the heart of the generous old man to record, relates the sale by him at Hertford Market of a load of wheat below market value to an "association of poor men," and how the people "got a great cheair into the Market Place with a mob to cheair me," whereas "the great dealers were forst to fly for it."

In city, town, and village, meetings were called to consider the best means of relieving the unexampled distress of the poor. Farmer Carrington, a few weeks after being carried round Hertford Market in a chair, made this entry in his diary:—"Jorney to St. Albans to Town Hall at a meeting of the Justices and all Overseers to consider what substitute instead of wheaten bread for the poor, or to save the wheat as much as possible."

Medical men found it absolutely necessary to recommend the Guardians of the Poor to enlarge their outdoor allowances, "to prevent disease as a natural consequence of bad living." The Government, unable to eke out the produce of the land, turned its anxious thoughts to the sea, and

recommended herrings! On the 27th December there was an attempt to make up for a hungry Christmas by the announcement that "a cargo of about 1,000 barrels of fresh-caught herrings, well cured for present consumption, is expected to arrive at Lynn in a few days, which the Government have directed to be consigned to the collector of customs at that port, to be disposed of at prime cost to such parts of the country where the inhabitants are desirous of promoting the measures recommended by the Committee of the House of Commons to supply them with plenty of good, wholesome food at a reasonable rate. Any order for fish directed to the collector will be duly attended to, and the herrings forwarded as soon as possible (either by land or water carriage) after their arrival at Lynn." But this spasmodic effort was only like throwing a sprat to a hungry whale, and the Government's experiment in hawking fish at prime cost was not likely to reach those who had no money to pay a "reasonable rate" for the fish. Other unusual manifestations of philanthropy allayed, though they did not remove, the popular discontent. Soup shops were established everywhere, and the wealthy subscribed liberally, and in this and other ways a good deal was done to mitigate the sorrows of a trying time.

Among amiably eccentric individuals who deserve to be remembered was the "man with the long beard," whose doings one hundred years ago would make a good newspaper paragraph to-day, and, in fact, 'went the round' of such papers as there were to give him publicity. "The man with the long beard" was simply a crockery man who attended country markets about Witney, Wallingford, Henley, Reading, and other towns. He had "great quantities of Tunbridge and hardware," which he offered for sale. After the good man had done business in the market place he "visits the habitations of the poor, whom he relieves as their necessity strikes him. In Reading alone he is known to have given away 170 guineas."

Another peculiarity of this Good Samaritan was that he "conveyed his crockery ware from market to market on three asses, and never slept in a house, but pitched his tent in a field."

The year 1800 had been bad enough, but the first year of the new century, the year 1801, was destined to be known as the memorable year of scarcity, and by April there was such a longing for relief from the strain that even correspondents for agricultural districts wrote—"The state of the poor cottagers is now truly deplorable, for, though barley may still be had, it is at an enormous price, and it is impossible for labourers to provide [barley bread] for their families at such prices. It is to corn merchants and dealers in grain, whose very existence they have been taught to curse [for holding back their stocks for a rise], that the good people of this country must now look, for near five months to come, for subsistence. If we have not an early harvest, God knows what will be the consequences." In truth, that harvest of 1801 was now looked forward to with as keen longing and anxiety as ever the Children of Israel looked for a sight of the Promised Land! The labouring poor were not the only class to suffer, and what such an experience meant for the small tradesman or shopkeeper may be judged by the alarming figures of the poor rate. To have collected the necessary amount in ordinary shilling rates would in many cases have meant a rate every fortnight, and in some cases nearly every week! At Royston, Herts, eleven 2s. rates were collected during the year, or 22s. in the pound, equal to £1 for every man, woman, and child in the town. For the small parish of Great Chishall, then in Essex, the rate was four times the average, and amounted to nearly £2 per head of the population. At Bocking, in Essex, it was reported to have reached 48s. in the pound! Other cases were reported in which the poor rate ran up to from four to ten times its normal amount.

In the midst of the people's cry for bread, the recruiting sergeant, aided by all the official machinery of the constables, overseers, and churchwardens, was beating up soldiers and sailors for the war, and these two questions—food and war—occupied the public mind to the exclusion of all else. The proclamations for obtaining recruits were a curious mixture of high falutin, blarney, sham patriotism, and bribes, and the artifices suggest a striking contrast with the Volunteer spirit by which the Army is recruited to-day. Here is an actual proclamation—not the taproom blarney of the recruiting sergeant—but the official language of the colonel in command of the regiment, addressed to our old friend Hodge, in the midst of his rural pursuits, when the men were needed to meet Napoleon's legions.

"All aspiring, high-spirited young men, who wish to serve their King and country, have now an opportunity of entering the above distinguished corps.

"If there was ever one period more momentous for these Kingdoms than another, it is the present.

"Now is the time, my lads, for you to rally round the Throne of your Sovereign, and justify the opinion that his subjects will bravely and determinedly stand by him and shed their last blood in the defence and support of him and their country, whenever he may find it necessary to claim their exertions.

"You have now a most glorious opportunity of showing the world what Britons can and will do for the vindication and maintenance of those valuable blessings, peace, justice, and liberty.

"The liberal bounty of 11 guineas will be given for the short period of seven years, and 16 guineas for unlimited service. The bringers of a recruit will, on application, be allowed three guineas.

"God save the King."

It may be that all the high falutin about shedding his last drop of blood in order to get peace, and the cheap-jack's familiar handling of the Throne and Sovereign, went a good deal over the head of poor Hodge, but he was often in those bitter years very hungry, and those guineas were a dream of untold wealth, and the halo of "glory, justice, and

liberty," and the rest might, after all, be possible to a man with 11 or 16 guineas in his pocket! The result was that Hodge marched proudly away with a bunch of ribbons in his cap and the King's shilling, as a deposit towards those guineas, in his pocket; marched away so frequently that in Devonshire "so many recruits came forward that the farmers complained they could not get enough men for the ordinary farm work." Too often, however, Hodge did not respond, and then a curious system of official canvassing and advertising was set in motion. For the line regiments and for the Navy, the local authority obtained its quota of men in the best way it could—in the cheapest market, in fact; for the men were generally bought, and the price varied with the scarcity of labour, dearness of bread, etc. When the notice from the Army authorities was received, the Overseers were required to call a meeting of the principal inhabitants to consider "the most speedy and effectual means of raising the said men," and they set about advertising as for a domestic servant—"Twenty-five Guineas Bounty. Wanted immediately, one man for the Parish of W——, to serve either in the Army or the Navy. Apply to the Overseers of the Parish." Sometimes a silver watch was added to the bounty. In other cases the advertisement set forth other inducements for men "to serve as seamen in the triumphant Navy of old England during the present war only," as in one official advertisement, in which the churchwardens fortified the parochial bounty by the prospect of 1 lb. of beef, 1 lb. of bread, and one gallon of beer per day. If these inducements did not prevail, the Magistrates had power to "levy such able-bodied and idle persons as may be found within their county," and for some offences the offender was given the choice of going to prison or into the Navy, and the press-gang was also doing its work.

As for the Army, the character of service was not at all attractive when the fear of the 'cat'—one Irish colonel

was reported to have had 70 of his regiment flogged in one day!—was “a strong check on recruiting.” It was alleged that “if the practice of some regiments was imitated throughout all, the whole seventy thousand would be flogged round in something like six years”! For the Militia, men were drawn by ballot, and all the steadiest young men joined an insurance society, which, for the payment of a few shillings a year, secured them the sum of ten guineas to purchase a substitute in case the insured should be drawn.

The billeting of soldiers was so frequent and unpopular with the publicans, that some of them took down their signs and shut up on account of the heavy burden of the soldiers billeted upon them.

The times presented this dramatic contrast, that the chief cause of all this depressing picture of domestic and social life, and the rough official method of manufacturing soldiers and sailors, was the prosecution of the greatest war this country has ever waged—the war with France, which, beginning in 1793, was destined to continue into the second decade of the next century. Against the people's cry for bread, there was the consolation of military glory, and the satisfaction for the common people that if the war made bread dear the valour of the men we sent out did bring back many French prisoners. The country people had an opportunity of seeing any number of Frenchmen, for at the end of the last century, when the French Government refused to provide for their prisoners in England, there were 25,000 of them, and next to the garrison towns of Portsmouth and Plymouth the largest number were kept at Norman Cross, on the North Road, beyond Huntingdon, where the return for the time shows that 3,038 were stationed. In the old records there are occasional references to these men, and here and there articles are to be found in houses “made by the French prisoners.”

One bright interval of a few months followed the

plentiful harvest of 1801. "Peace now thorowly settled, and to-night London illuminated—Peace, Peace, Peace now ratified and settle all of a suding, quite unexpected, though not before it was wanted. Hertford and London again illuminated on Monday night, the 12th, great rejoicing!" So Farmer Carrington sent a gleam across the pages of his rustic diary, but another farmer in Norfolk was a little "dubersome." Like many others, he did not believe it would last, and at a barber's shop in Norwich offered two guineas for a shave in return for "one every year until the Treaty of Peace with France arrived." The barber shaved him, took the two guineas, and the definitive treaty arrived a few weeks later! The truce did not last long, but while it lasted the interval was made the most of in elaborate peace rejoicings and illuminations all over the land as soon as the preliminaries of peace were settled. Some of the mottoes and transparencies were significant—"The lion and the lamb," "Vive Bonaparte," "Vive la République," "Each nation from hence no enmity shall know, thanks be to Otto, Hawkesbury, and Co." Very soon the rôle of the lamb was found to be too mild a description for Bonaparte; and as for "Otto, Hawkesbury, and Co.," the French and English Ministers who signed the preliminaries of peace, their pens were soon pitted once more against the sword, and the war cloud settled down over the land with renewed intensity.





CHAPTER III.

THE ROMANCE OF INVASION.

THE echo of that welcome note, "Peace with France!" the cheers which had thrilled the life of England at the peace rejoicing of 1802, and the gleam of light which shot across the gloom, giving promise that the long dark night was breaking in a rosy morn, had scarcely died away when the storm-cloud gathered once more, and a new terror crept over the English people. In the poverty and misery with which the century had closed, the people of England had subsisted for years past almost upon "barley bread and glory." But the glory of war in which the figure of Nelson fired the popular imagination, even while the people were crying for bread, was threatened with an eclipse in a way that had never seriously troubled England for more than two hundred years. The "magnanimous First Consul," who had been toasted and cheered in London and at every public gathering a few short months before, suddenly appeared like a quick change actor on the stage as the "Corsican Ogre," and all England for the moment saw only the lurid picture of coming trouble, so vividly described by Wordsworth:—

"In black eclipse
Light after light goes out. One evil star,
Luridly glaring through the smoke of War,
As in the dream of the Apocalypse,
Drags others down."

War again broke out, and it was no longer a distant war on the Continent, drawing once more the lifeblood and treasure away from the famishing people of England that was most feared, but a new terror that the First Consul was about to thrust upon those who in this island had only a few short months before been cheering his name in the peace rejoicings in our streets! "We who sometimes discuss merely as a theory the possibility of an invasion of England can form a very faint idea how terribly real was the Napoleonic bogey to our grandfathers," when the shadow of that colossal stride of the Corsican adventurer was darkening the homes of every town, village, and hamlet in this land. Even thoughtful men had come to think of Napoleon as a kind of evil influence or fate, which if it came their way, it would be hopeless to try to avert, while to the ignorant and superstitious he was a part of the Apocalyptic vision; the coming figurehead in the battle of Armageddon. What this meant for the common people may be understood when even politicians declared that the sun of England's glory had set!

There had been one little foretaste of what the feeling of alarm might be upon an actual landing of foreign troops on our shores. This was the invasion in miniature which a few years before, while the Dutch, French, and Spanish fleets were combining for a descent upon our shores, had actually landed French soldiers on the Welsh coast at Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire. The news "spread through the country with the rushing violence of a prairie fire, bringing with it wherever it went an overwhelming sense of doom; mounted heralds posted through the length and breadth of Wales, without waiting to ascertain the force of the enemy." One of the heralds passing by an Independent Chapel in Cardiganshire, in which a preaching service was being held, whispered the dread omen to someone at the door, and sped on with his message. Inside the chapel the terrible message spread among the worshippers

from pew to pew. The preacher, bewildered by the mysterious consternation spreading over his audience, inquired the cause, when someone shouted, "The French have landed at Fishguard!" The whole congregation was seized with panic, but no one dared to stir. The preacher collapsed, and in vain brave Nancy Jones called out to him, "Go on! If the French are at Fishguard, we have God to take care of us!" But it was all very well to say, "Go on"; the preacher could not do so! Then the brave woman remembered the stirring hymn written by one who had touched the sacred harp of Wales when the memorable earthquake at Lisbon made the end of the world seem near, and started the tune—

"If Thou wouldst end the world, O Lord,
Accomplish first Thy promised word,
And gather home with one accord
From every part Thine own,
* * * *
And after that—come down!"

The effect was electrical! The terrified congregation took up the appeal, fairly caught the 'hwyl,' and for the moment forgot all about the French at Fishguard!

But though that little tragi-comedy at Fishguard ended in the French taking to their ships at the sight of the Welsh women's red cloaks, the incident shows how heavily Bonaparte sat on the popular mind during the closing years of the last century. When with colossal strides the Corsican went forth to conquer the East and "take Europe in the rear," it was only Nelson at sea that stood between England and despair. Even of worse portent was the morning of the new century, when in open day Bonaparte formed his great camp at Boulogne, and there sat down with the deliberate intention of an invasion of England. Then, as now, the English people had confidence in their ships at sea, but on land the exploits of Napoleon, who soon caused the dying Pitt to exclaim, "Roll up that map

of Europe ; it will not be wanted these ten years," was fast becoming not only a household word, but a terror to many throughout England. "Let us be masters of the Channel for six hours, and we are masters of the world," exclaimed Napoleon, as his army of 100,000 men assembled on the opposite coast at Boulogne, with a fleet of flat-bottomed boats ready to convey them across to England.

On the 24th of May, 1803, the House of Commons woke up from its humdrum routine of passing Local Enclosure Acts, and realized in a panic the necessity of some unity of action from the whole nation against the threatened invasion. Forthwith a committee was appointed to draw up an address to his Majesty, and next day did present an address expressing "indignation at the restless spirit of ambition and domination" shown by the Government of France, and the assurance that as the representatives of a brave and loyal people, they would stand by his Majesty in calling forth the resources of the United Kingdom for the vigorous support of "a cause in which are involved the dignity of your Crown, the rights and liberties of your people, and all that is dear and valuable to us as a free and independent nation."

The King gratefully acknowledged this spirited address, and the House began voting supplies, sanctioning three great lotteries to raise a million pounds or more, by the issue of "80,000 tickets at £13 3s. 1d. each"; and providing for the exercise and billeting of Volunteers. Then, as the cloud darkened over the land, Parliament set about amending its old Statutes, "to enable his Majesty more effectively to provide for the defence and security of the realm, for indemnifying persons who may suffer in their property by such measures as may be necessary for that purpose, and more effectually and speedily to exercise his ancient and undoubted prerogative in requiring the military service of his liege subjects." For this purpose Bills were introduced by the Secretary for War, were read in hot

haste, first and second times in the same day, in committee the next day, and then sent to the Lords and back again with incredible rapidity, until the old Parliamentary machine fairly creaked with the speed at which things were moving.

"In order to prevent any misapprehension of the measures taken for the defence of the Kingdom against a French invasion," the Government issued a proclamation reminding all true lovers of their country that by the Act lately passed a force of 60,000 would be ready in case of necessity on the shortest notice, properly armed and equipped, and ready to join the Militia of their own county. "There is the greatest reason to hope that the knowledge of such a preparation may be sufficient to prevent the enemy from being desperate enough to make an attempt which could only end in their ruin. God save the King and protect old England."

That official 60,000 defenders was soon augmented by many more who voluntarily enrolled themselves. In every part of the country "loyal associations" of volunteers sprang up, or set to work drilling and fitting themselves for the coming conflict with the invaders. Men left their workshops, their counting-houses, their lands, and even their crops in harvest to come up certain hours of the day to drill in the market-square of the town or on the village green. Old colours were brought out or new ones presented, and with drums beating and bugles sounding, the whole country put on a martial air until, as Cruikshank has told us, "little boys in the streets formed juvenile regiments, in imitation of their elders, and with their drums and colours presented by their mammas and sisters, made gun stocks with polished broom sticks for barrels."

From the highest in the land examples were not wanting. The great William Pitt, Prime Minister through many stormy years, who was just now free from office, passed from politics to soldiering, and though the Whigs laughed at the idea of the politician becoming military commander,

he, as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, put himself at the head of 3,000 Kentish volunteers, and displayed great "military genius," and wrote thus confidently of the coast defences. "We have now fitted or are fitting, I believe, about 170 boats between Margate and Hastings, which, I think, will contribute not a little to giving the enemy a good reception whenever they think proper to visit us."

Meanwhile the "men of Kent," upon whom the brunt was expected to fall, were being backed up all over the country, inspired by the common purpose so finely expressed in Wordsworth's stirring lines—

"No parleying now ; in Britain is one breath ;
We all are with you now from shore to shore.
Ye men of Kent, 't is victory or death !"

The pulpits all through the land reflected the military zeal of the time, with such texts as "To your tents, O Israel !" In many country towns and villages, the clergyman would second his text in a practical fashion by leading out his congregation from the service to military exercises on the green. Of this, there is the story told of the Vicar of Royston, Herts, who was also captain of the "Royston and Barkway Loyal Volunteers." He was credited with having ascended the pulpit with surplice thrown over his military armour, and then when the service was ended, "a gallant band of natives, headed by their military vicar, the Rev. Thomas Shield, in full regimentals, and accompanied by old J—— W——, the parish clerk and music master, as leader of the band, marched through the streets on Sunday afternoon to the sound of the fife and the drum, and all the little boys in the place learned to play soldiers !"

At other places at the close of the service in church the men were invited into the vestry to enrol themselves, of which a few examples may be given. At St. Mary's Church, Newmarket, on Sunday, August 12th, "129

Volunteers entered their names to learn the use of arms and to be ready if wanted; and Mr. Chambers Hammond offered three broad-wheeled waggons and 18 horses, Mr. Robert Bryant five waggons and three carts and 37 horses, and others made offers of smaller numbers with the requisite drivers." At Downham Market, Norfolk, on a Sunday in the same month, at a vestry there at the close of the service in church, "upwards of 150 of the loyal and patriotic inhabitants volunteered their services for the defence of King and country, and the following morning 30 more brave fellows came forward and enrolled themselves." In the various parish churches in Norwich upwards of 2,000 enrolled themselves, and at Bury St. Edmund's five Volunteer Corps were raised.

In London "a number of gallant and exceedingly good old men, who had during the best part of their lives been beating the waves, now came forward with the zeal and spirit of lads, swearing allegiance to the King with a determined purpose to act manfully in his defence and for the protection of the capital on the river." In this manner all over the land the volunteer spirit was roused, and in an incredibly short time a volunteer army of 300,000 had got enrolled. There had been nothing like these old recruiting scenes in the parish churches in England since the recruiting for King or Parliament and the taking of the Solemn League and Covenant in the Church at the opening of the great Civil War in the seventeenth century.

The kind of marksmanship which was possible at the hands of the zealous Volunteers, who so valiantly came forward to defend their homes against the invader, was not exactly up to the Wimbledon or Bisley form of this end of the century, but it was the best they could do with the weapons available, and there is abundant evidence that they practised at the butts and tried to improve themselves in this respect. Here is the actual register of the officer in

charge of the butts for the Spalding troop of Yeomanry and Loyal Volunteer Infantry, taken on October 5th, 1803, a few weeks after that Sunday recruiting at the parish churches. There were 74 persons that fired, 25 Yeomanry and 49 Infantry, and they had five shots each, the distance not stated, and this was the result :—

No. of Marksmen.	Yeo.	Inf.	Ttl.
No. of persons that fired	25	49	74
No. of persons that hit the target	16	29	45
No. that did not hit the target	9	20	29
No. of shots fired	125	245	370
No. of shots that hit the target	37	45	82
No. of shots that did not hit the target.....	88	200	288

Here, then, were 29 persons who in five tries did not hit the target at all, and out of 370 shots fired 288 went wide of the target ! The members of the Boston Independent Armed Association did not equal this degree of marksmanship. Their record was that out of 108 persons who fired, only 37 hit the target, and 72 missed it. Some of the ‘crack’ corps of the Metropolis did a little better. The Hampstead Volunteers fired at a target on the Heath, and “many excellent shots were fired,” and “some nearly entered the bull’s-eye.” But if their shooting was at first imperfect, the resolution of these old Volunteers was unwavering, as they sang over tankards of ale—

“Shall Frenchmen rule o’er us? King Edward said No !
 And No said King Harry, and Queen Bess she said No !
 And No said old England, and No she says still !
 They will never rule o’er us, let them try if they will !”

The prospect of invasion raised other considerations besides the number of men prepared to fight and the accuracy of their shooting, considerations affecting the civil population, non-combatants, and forage. In the month of July, 1803, in all the shires of England, at

any rate in those nearest the south and eastern coasts, meetings of the deputy-lieutenants were held to organize defensive measures. After voting a loyal address to the King and pledging themselves to support his Majesty in the war with France, they now set about organizing a scheme for establishing a system of communication throughout each county, and for "rendering the body of the people instruments for the general defence in case of invasion." Cambridgeshire and other Eastern counties passed various resolutions declaring "the immediate necessity of all possible measures being taken, and the most vigorous exertions by all descriptions of persons for the defence of the Constitution and preservation of the county at this most important crisis."

This is how the Napoleonic omens and the bustle all over rural England impressed Farmer Carrington, whose quaint diary of Hertfordshire doings has already been quoted. Writing under date July 12th, 1803, he says:—"There was a great meeting at the Town Hall [Hertford] for the defence of the country. . . . This month we are threatened to be invaded by one Bonaparte, by the French, and England is to be divided among the French, and every man is to be killed, and the women to be saved, so we are raising of men from 17 to 55, one class, and from 15 to 60 the other class; so nothing but soldiering three times a week, to St. Albans to draw and swear in—fine work!"

It was a time of grave anxiety in Norfolk. It was feared that if the French attempted an invasion of England, a landing might be effected on the Norfolk coast. Mr. Gurney, of the famous banking family of that name, ordered that "four carriages should always be kept in readiness in case of alarm, to convey his family to Ely, which he considered would be a safer place." To the above extract from "The Annals of an East Anglian Bank," may be added this further crisp little bit of paternal

prudence. Miss Priscilla Gurney, of the same family, writes thus to Mrs. Fry: "My father intends to write out directions for every individual member of his family, so that there may be no confusion or bustle whenever the moment of danger arrives, if it ever does arrive."

At Margate, where Pitt's 'Bombardiers' formed a 'scratch lot,' a tradition survives that with the alarm that 'Boney' was coming, "a man at the Six Bells had the key to go into the church to swing the tenor bell if he should land." A wag set the bell ringing somewhat prematurely, and the 'Bombardiers' were called out of their beds, "shivering and shaking with fear of the expected invasion."

The men of Kent, as being likely to have to face the brunt of the invasion, led the way in putting their house in order for the great migration inland of the non-combatants out of reach of the invading army when it came; and other counties followed their example. Over each hundred in the county, a lieutenant was appointed to act in conjunction with the county lieutenancy; such lieutenants had to appoint an inspector for each hundred, and the inspector was to appoint a superintendent for each parish. Every parish had to provide a proper place of assembling in case the invader and his hordes made their appearance. Live stock had to be driven inland away from the coast, "in order that indemnification might be estimated for such as could not be removed."

The general plan of organizing the people was something as follows:—The removal of stock and unarmed inhabitants farther inland was to be effected after this fashion—"First in order were to go the horses and waggons, conveying those persons who were unable to remove themselves; then the cattle, then the sheep and all other live stock; intelligent and active persons to be set apart to superintend these measures." Then every individual was to agree to act in assisting the regular force in "desultory warfare" in case of the enemy landing,

and "when invasion had actually taken place, to band themselves together twenty-five to thirty-five men in a company, with a lieutenant or leader, if on foot as Volunteer Infantry, and if mounted as Yeomany." As to unarmed inhabitants generally, they had, too, their allotted place as pioneers. They were to form themselves into companies, of not less than twenty-five or more than seventy-five, the men to come provided, if possible, with pickaxes, spades and shovels, bill-hooks and felling-axes, "each twenty-five men to have a leader, and for every fifty men a captain in addition."

For the purpose of forage and transport, the nobility, gentry, and farmers were requested to sign statements showing how many waggons, horses, and carts they could place at the disposal of the nation in an emergency. For every parish the churchwardens had to send up to the county lieutenancy a return of its people, its horses and cattle, carts, waggons, and foodstuff, and these were duly handed in at church on Sunday, at the time of the enrolment of the Volunteers. One such return from the parish of Great Chishall, on the borders of Essex and Cambridgeshire, lies before me as I write, and it is full of suggestiveness. It gives a complete census—an old-world parochial snapshot—of every man, woman, and child, and every living thing, of every mouthful of foodstuff, and everything on wheels, of every man who could wield an axe, and every axe to wield, and the best men fitted to lead that strange little coming exodus to a safer distance from the destroying hosts of the invader. Everything was taken in that old documentary picture just as it was at the moment. By means of it the Government was not only acquainted with the available resources of each parish, but the schedule itself assigned every man his work, and constituted the marching orders of Arcady, when the signal came.

For this parish of Great Chishall, John Cornwell, the

most substantial man in the parish, was placed at the head of the parochial organization as superintendent, and all the able-bodied were assigned their place in getting the strange little exodus on the way to safety—the waggons and carts under a score of men with an overseer. The removal of cattle and sheep in charge of a similar batch with an overseer and the “persons stationary” were to be left in charge of the parish constable to keep order generally. But between these unarmed non-combatants and the Volunteers, who were drilling and shooting, there came the interesting bands of pioneers, with their axes, pickaxes, bill-hooks, spades, and saws, working under competent guides. In the accompanying document is the actual picture of Arcady militant, classified, packed up, and labelled ready for the unknown march away from its old moorings, should fate so determine.

With such means as these, the pioneers were charged with the duty of cutting trees along the great highways to check the progress of Bonaparte’s legions, if once they landed; while the parish and its belongings was on the move to a safer distance from the foe. It is an interesting old-world picture in which the peasants of Arcady were to be suddenly parted from their old moorings. To the children it was a time of fear unspeakable—called upon to tie up their little bundle of clothes, ready to join in the flight if the dread signal came in the night-time. The old pitch-pan telegraph had been revived once more, and by October constant watch was kept on the eastern coast, and tar-barrels were fixed, ready to light, on the churches of Lowestoft and Woodbridge, “in order to give the alarm in case the enemy should effect a landing at night in that vicinity, and beacons were in readiness at other places in the adjoining counties.” In the Eastern Counties 30,000 troops were ready to be moved when required at a moment’s notice, and the King was to be brought down to Chelmsford, or Dartford in Kent.

GREAT CHISHALL, OCTOBER 13TH, 1803.

A COPY OF THE SCHEDULES BY GOVERNMENT RESPECTING INVASION.

	Cows.	Colts.	Sheep.	Hogs.	Nags.	Horses.	Waggons.	Carts.	Qrs. Wheat.	Qrs. Oats.	Qrs. Barley.	Peas.	Hay.	Malt Qrs.
John Cornwall ...	2	2	240	25	1	11	2	3	120	100	350	30	20'3	40
Wm. Ridenton ...	9	4	280	27	1	11	2	2	60	80	200	30	10	—
Geo. Hagger ...	2	—	—	10	—	4	1	2	10	40	50	2	8	—
James Baker ...	4	—	—	20	1	4	1	2	28	30	100	10	3	—
Wm. Wilkerson...	5	—	—	20	1	3	1	2	20	40	100	10	5	—
John Pichis ...	4	—	—	9	—	2	—	2	8	20	40	5	2	—
Job Andrews ...	1	—	—	2	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
27	6	520	113	4	36	7	14	246	310	840	87	48'3	40	

<i>Go with Waggons and Carts.</i>		<i>For Removing Cattle.</i>		<i>For Removal of Sheep.</i>		<i>Persons Stationary.</i>	
J. Dellow.	J. Hagger.	W. Dellow.	W. Nun.	R. Pitty.	J. Pitty.	J. Everitt.	
T. Ives.	D. Fowler.	J. Hays.	J. Bril (?).	H. Pitty.	H. Pitty.	J. Wilkerson.	
J. Evenit.	J. Hoy.	B. Barns.	J. Balden.	H. Waters.	H. Waters.	J. Hagger.	
T. Evenit.	J. Spier.	J. Rumbold.	R. Butten.	T. Watts.	T. Watts.	W. Evenit, jun.	
G. Thorn.	G. Smith.	T. Rumbold.	W. Clark.	T. Young.	T. Young.	N. Pitty.	
J. Burn.	W. Cakebread.	J. Rumbold.	G. Hagger	J. Young.	R. Cornwell.	T. Smith.	
N. Pitty.	J. Warren.	W. Wing.	(Overseer).	R. Cornwell.	T. Muncer.	J. Pichis.	
J. Waters.	T. Warren.			T. Muncer.	W. Ridenton	J. Hagger	
J. Smith.	W. Wilkerson			W. Ridenton	(Overseer).	(Constable).	
J. Smith.	(Overseer).						

Names of Persons engaged as Pioneers.

J. Wilson	...	...	...	Axes	R. Grinnell	...	...	Pickaxes	1
T. Thorn	...	...	...	"	P. Young	...	...	"	1
W. Everit	...	...	...	"	J. Hagger	...	...	"	1
H. Waters	...	...	...	"	J. Everit	...	...	"	1
T. Grinnell	...	...	...	"	T. Muncer	...	...	"	1
J. Jackson	...	...	...	"	J. Young	...	...	"	1
T. Lovday	...	...	...	"	J. Pitty	...	...	Billhook	1
T. Baker	...	...	...	"	T. Burrows	...	...	"	1
W. Mansfield	...	...	...	"	T. Barlowman	...	...	"	1
W. Mansfield	...	...	...	"	J. Marshall	...	...	"	1
J. Mansfield	...	...	...	"	J. Hayden	...	...	Spade	
J. Hagger	...	...	...	"	J. Hoy	...	...	a Saw	
T. Hagger	...	...	...	"		

James Baker, a guide for Government.

John Ridenton, a guide for Government (waggons and carts).

John Cornwell, superintendent.

J. Cornwell	...	1	waggon	3	horses	1	cart	2	horses	3	servants.
W. Ridenton	...	1	"	3	"	1	"	2	"	3	"
W. Wilkerson	...	—	—	—	—	1	"	2	"	1	"
J. Baker	...	—	—	—	—	1	"	2	"	1	"
G. Hagger	...	—	—	—	—	1	"	2	"	1	"

Engage in the Schedule, 90 persons ... 90

13 or 14 boys, from the ages of 10 to 15 ... 14

Girls, 12, from the age of 10 to 15 ... 12

Sick, 4 ... 4

120

Women and children, aged and infirm ... 173

Total number ... 293

A day was appointed for general fasting and humiliation, and Volunteers were drilled and marched to church to hear suitable discourses in the old Cromwellian spirit of "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry." Under date October 26th, 1803, Farmer Carrington records in his diary: "Twenty-seven thousand Volunteers reviewed by his Majesty in the High Park, London, and on Friday, the 28th, the same number—supposed to be 50,000 spectators ;

I never saw such a sight in all my days." But the means of defence gave confidence, and the affair had its lighter side. In some cases popular sentiment was associated with local acts, and men who had formerly looked to France for liberty found it better "to bear the ills they had than fly to others they knew not of." In the harvest-time at Soham, in Cambridgeshire, a great advocate for the French "was convinced that all ranks in this country would suffer the severest of tortures and linger a life of African slavery if the French army should ever execute their horrible intentions upon England; and to show the sincerity of his convictions, he gave his favourite picture of Bonaparte to suffer the treatment which the original deserves. The town-crier proclaimed it in the village, and upwards of 300 persons met at the time appointed to show their abhorrence of the venomous reptile by aiming their bullets and blows at the picture of the tyrant."

In such a serious crisis, when the very existence of a nation seemed at stake, a remarkable manifestation of zeal, shown by a great army of Volunteers, and in the measures taken for the defence of the country, had given confidence to the people, and raised the spirit of all, until some of the wits of the day found in the situation an almost inexhaustible store of comedy and burlesque. There is scarcely a more interesting item in the vast catalogue of the British Museum Library than such collections as those of Miss Banks, which are rich in satirical ballads, humorous broadsides, caricatures by Gillray and others, cartoons, etc. You may there find the 'First Consul' posing as a new Moses, with lists of his Ten Commandments; in others you may find a catechism as to who Napoleon was, with answers other than flattering. There are few more effective cartoons in our political history than those of Gillray and others dealing with this period. In one of these is depicted a thin, sentimental Frenchman, attitudinizing before John Bull's stout, robust

figure, saying in supercilious tones, "You be von poor slave!" to which John Bull replies by summing up the thin Frenchman in his own plain, phlegmatic British way—"You be d——d."

Then there were, in these old cartoons, delightful pictures of Madame Bonaparte dropping in self-invited to take a cup of tea with Mrs. Bull. The French Madame's efforts to impress Mrs. Bull with her husband's wonderful fame, and the hint that he might possibly think of paying a visit to "your John some of these days," were insinuations which roused the old dame's ire, and Mrs. Bull replies: "You impudent hussy, how dare you mention such a thing before me! If I give you any advice it will be to take yourself off before John comes home!"

Among the mock play-bills occurs the following:—"In rehearsal, Theatre Royal, United Kingdom, some dark, foggy night, about November next, will be attempted by a strolling company of French vagrants, an old pantomimic farce, called 'Harlequin's Invasion, or the Disappointed Banditti.'" In others, Napoleon was announced as Principal Buffo, "being his first, and most likely his last, appearance on the stage." From the green room, the satire and the spirit of comedy spread into the streets and to the village green, as the young men and lads gained confidence by their soldiering and their ale, until the 'Corsican' figured in the popular songs of the day, perhaps in none more effectually than in this little parody on the fine old ballad of the "Blue Bells of Scotland," sung with gusto in the playhouse, the coffee-house, at the country posting-houses, and on the village green:—

"When and O when, does this little Boney come?"

Perhaps he'll come in August! Perhaps he'll stay at home!

But it's O in my heart, how I'll hide him should he come!"

On the other side of the Channel the French were also giving expression to the opposite point of view, which

included their triumphal entry into the city of London, and the realization of that sanguine toast drunk in the banqueting-halls at Calais on the arrival of Bonaparte there in July : "To the French Quartermaster who shall first billet his troops at Dover, and to the speedy review of the French Guard in St. James's Park !"

Alas for the wits, the loyal associations, and the brilliant marksmen among the Volunteers, who were 'spoiling for a fight,' and for the Frenchmen, 'Boney' never came to put their professions to the test. He thought better of it, but through many years of the opening century he kept our soldiers and sailors busy on land and sea. "The Emperor of the French has no common fortifications, his martello towers are the kingdoms of Europe, his crowns and sceptres are the palisades of his entrenchments, and kings are his sentinels." So spoke the great orator Sheridan of the years in which Napoleon held Europe, if not in the hollow of his hand, in constant dread of his power. Eleven years after the century began, Lord Grey declared that "France is now Empress of the Continent, and the independence of Europe is lost." Though finally vanquished by Wellington and Blucher, "you cannot, even to this day, turn over the pages of old parish records, or stir the placid waters of old men's memories, without finding traces of this old ghost which Wellington wrestled with so terribly on the fields of Waterloo." The man has gone the way of all flesh, but his acts remain, colouring the memory of the times like a stain through the pages of some old book which has long been closed.

Of the great struggle which came to an end with Waterloo, Mr. Fitchett, in his recent history, rightly says :— "It was a war which left to the English name a legacy of imperishable glory, but which also extracted from English pockets over £1,400,000,000 in glittering coin, and which arrested for a generation the social and political development of Great Britain. But if ever a war was

morally justifiable, it was this. It was a war forced upon England. It was fought for great ends. For England herself it was something more than a struggle for national existence. It was, in its final shape, a struggle for the freedom of the world against a universal military despotism. As one of its unforeseen results, the great war with the French put into the hands of the English practically all the Colonies, and nearly all the carrying trade of the world. And the England of to-day has entered into that splendid inheritance. The Napoleonic war thus helped to make possible the far-stretching Empire over which, at the end of the nineteenth century, the British flag flies."





CHAPTER IV.

THE PEASANTS' RISING AFTER WATERLOO.

A STRANGER spectacle than that of Arcady in revolt was assuredly never witnessed by gods or men, and yet it has been witnessed more than once in our island story, when the great, dumb mass of the country people have found their voice, and having found it, spoke. A large part of the sorrows of Arcady in the early days of the century had its origin in the amazing ineptitude of the official mind and its helplessness to grasp the simple fact that the function of officials is to serve those by whom, or on whose behalf, they were appointed, rather than to receive service and obeisance. From Bumbledom up to the Court of Quarter Sessions, the officialism of the time was permeated with a trace of 'divine right,' and so whenever there was anything like an organized expression of discontent it was at once put down as "a designing attempt against the higher orders of society." In so far as the "higher orders" were associated with the official mind—and this was often a very considerable factor in the situation—it is true that the people did sometimes look with disfavour in that quarter, for the simple reason that it was the only direction in which they considered they were entitled to look for a remedy. But another reason which provoked open manifestations of discontent in times of pressure was the fact

that even where local officials came in daily contact with the suffering and discontent and were inclined to sympathize with their poorer neighbours, they could, too often, only stand helplessly by between laws too big and clumsy for local application and their neighbours' necessities. Arcady was still distant from the parting of the ways between competition and official methods of regulating prices; all channels of intercommunication were clogged, and the toiler with his small wage of 9s. per week could not look either to the seasons or to the cheapest market for hope of relief, but to the official mind of the overseer to make up wages to a standard of bare subsistence, and to the justices to regulate prices. There was, therefore, no alternative for the starving labourer but to look to the officials for relief, and run the risk of being accused of flat rebellion against the higher orders of society.

In 1816, when the bonfires and the huzzas of Waterloo had scarcely died away, when that old vision of the giant shadow of Napoleon was still visible, like the Spectre of the Brocken, thrown on the lingering smoke of the battle-fields of Europe—though the little man himself was pacing the solitary rock of St. Helena—there arose a universal discontent with the intolerable strain of paper money, low wages, and high prices for the necessities of life, which was everywhere driving the people into a spirit of revolt. "Hundreds of mouths were deprived of their daily food, and no substantial means of employment being placed before the labourer, he was left to steal, to beg, or to starve." Government, to prevent violence, stationed military detachments "in all those parts which were most likely to become the seat of disorder." The wealthy, now that the wars were over, frequently left their country, draining it of "the little specie left of the abundance of former times, and the circulating medium at home was fictitious" [paper money]; and tradesmen "in respectable country towns were actually discussing the propriety of abandoning business

altogether, shutting up their shops, and bidding a determined defiance to the tax-gatherer." In fact, everybody who had anything to lose felt like getting away from the seething mass of discontent, and leaving officialism in charge, with the Dragoons to sit on the safety-valve.

In the Isle of Ely, the sluggish heart of the weird Fen Country of the olden time, there have been some tableaux of history—from Hereward the Wake to the sieges of Crowland. But the peasants' revolt, which culminated at Littleport and Ely in the month of May, 1816, had a character of its own which touches the depths of despair, and throws a lurid light upon the operations of officialism and the penal code in the early years of the nineteenth century. In a sense the Fenmen's revolt was serious enough, and yet there was something in it of comedy as well as tragedy; for having all the outward symptoms of violence, there was in its inception a deeply human side, and in its methods a crude imitation of power which almost touched the burlesque. The Fenmen, struggling on in their dykes upon the despairing pittance of 9s. a week, with bread at a shilling the quartern loaf, had reached the point at which despair becomes desperation, when they heard of what was being done elsewhere to assert their rights to subsistence by men hardly less pressed than themselves.

On Thursday evening, May 16th, 1816, at dusk, a mob had assembled in Norwich Market Place, broke the Town Hall windows, marched to the new mills, breaking the public lamps on their way. At the mills they broke the windows and effected an entrance, carried off a quantity of flour, "some of which they threw into the river, and some they carried away in sacks," and by the time the Mayor and constables, and sundry "respectable persons with torches" to light them along the now lampless roads, had reached the mills, the mob had got out of the way. On the next night the mob reassembled in Norwich Market Place. The Mayor, backed up this time by the Militia,

Yeomanry Cavalry, Dragoon Guards, Magistrates, constables, *et hoc genus omne*, read the Riot Act, which only provoked a shower of stones, and the military cleared the streets. At Brandon the heavy official mind was roused by a small reflection of the revolt at Norwich, and women in this case figured among those who were committed to prison.

The next uprising was among the village folk of the Fens, and marked the beginning of the tragedy which was to culminate under the shadows of the Cathedral at Ely. On the Monday following the Norwich incident, the infection had reached the neighbourhood of Downham in the Norfolk fringe of the Fens. Here the country people rallied to their leaders, and went forth to the new crusade of realizing literally what Wordsworth had written in a higher sense of the dreamers in the French Revolution, twenty years before—

“Henceforth whate’er is wanting in yourselves
In others ye shall promptly find, and all
Be rich by mutual and reflected wealth.”

Here is how the romance of revolution began in the Fens. “A great number of persons of the labouring class (owing to the late advance of corn and the lowness of wages) assembled at the village of Southery, in Norfolk, and immediately proceeded for Downham, between which places (about seven miles distance) they forced labourers from their houses and work to join them, and every person they met was compelled to return with them. When they arrived at the latter place, the number amounted to nearly fifteen hundred. They immediately commenced their scene of action at the shops of millers and bakers, and taking away bread, flour, etc. At Mr. William Baldwin’s mill a great many sacks of wheatmeal were thrown into the street and spoiled. They then proceeded to the

publicans and demanded ale, which was brought by pails into the street, the rioters forcing many of the inhabitants to drink with them. They went to the Crown Inn, and drove the Magistrates (who were holding their weekly sitting) from the rooms into the street, who with great difficulty succeeded in escaping."

Afterwards they proceeded to the butchers', whose shops they cleared, during which time the tradesmen in general were in a state of dreadful anxiety, expecting the rioters would make an attack upon their premises, but they were prevented by the appearance of the Upwell troop of cavalry; and when the Magistrates, escorted by the troop, read the Riot Act, the greatest possible confusion ensued, and several gentlemen narrowly escaped with life from brickbats, stones, clubs, etc., that now flew in every direction. By the aid of special constables, however, ten men and four women were taken and put into confinement, and the rest gradually dispersed. Fortunately, no lives were lost. "Captain Lee, who commanded the troops, ordered the men to use the back of their swords, thereby preventing carnage that must otherwise have ensued." The following morning, Tuesday, brought greater terror to the inhabitants than the preceding day, as it was generally reported that the rioters were preparing to attack the town with redoubled vigour. The Magistrates directed the inhabitants to arm themselves with whatever could be procured, and in a very short time the town wore a very formidable appearance. The inhabitants, with the cavalry, then proceeded to meet the rioters, who armed themselves with guns, pitchforks, clubs, and other weapons, ready for a general attack, when an agreement was made by the gentlemen to allow them an advance of wages, and to release those persons already taken, which induced them to return peaceably to their homes.

It was at Littleport, in the Isle of Ely, that the voice of the Fenmen next became articulate, and the smouldering

discontent of the country actually broke again into riot, shouldered pitchforks, clubs, and guns, and generally showed a striking degree of method in the revolt. At the Globe public-house, Littleport, the leaders rallied their forces, and, without wasting time in getting drunk, they, an hour later, sallied forth on the new crusade. Outside the public-house they formed into marching order, with their standard-bearer, one Walker, carrying a long pole, with "some printed stuff on the end of it, like a flag." Behind him came the mob, some 100 to 150 in number, some armed with pitchforks and crowbars, one with a butcher's cleaver, others, too, if the excited imagination of witnesses did not play them false, with guns, but the great bulk, like Mark Benton the mole-catcher, had contented themselves with clubs. Up the village street, with an eye on the more prosperous inhabitants—the farmers, the millers, and the shopkeepers—and thoughts of the fat treasuries of the city of Ely beyond, the new revolution surged with increasing numbers, and its exalted piece of printed stuff waving on in front. News of the driving of the Magistrates out of their Court House at Downham had spread like wildfire, and all Littleport knew, had known for some hours, what was brewing; the responsible inhabitants took serious note of the menacing aspect of things, and laid their plans accordingly, or prepared to submit to the worst. In some houses "money and notes were hastily put away in places of concealment." Even the children, tired and sleepy after their long May-day's activity, were taken or kept from their beds, and made use of to save the household treasury. With banknotes hurriedly stitched into their clothing, the terrified children were sent out in hiding into the orchards and adjoining hemp-fields, "there to remain in fearful expectation until the evil time had passed over."

Up the village street stood the general shop of those days, with its woollen stuffs, brown sugar, vinegar, and tea at 8s. a pound; and attached to this shop was a farm.

Here, then, were the two disturbing factors of the situation—employment and low wages and provisions at high prices—and towards this house the surging crowd of noisy discontent marched, breaking sundry windows on the way to get the weapons in tune. Mrs. Waddelow, an aged widow, kept the shop, and Henry Martin, her grandson, kept the farm, both living together in the same house. The rioters passed and repassed the house, and then young Martin, with other farmers, and Mr. Vachell, the clergyman, went down the street with the mob and tried pacific measures. The farmers offered 2s. a day against the 9s. a week the men were receiving, and Martin offered to sell flour at 2s. 6d. a stone, or less, “if the Magistrates should think it ought to be done.” But it was all to no purpose, and he left them to go and look after his own.

Seeing the mob coming marching back up the street towards his house, Martin got out of the way in consequence of being alarmed, but left £5 in the hands of one of his men to satisfy the rioters. “Here is £5; what do you want to do mischief for?” said the man to the ring-leaders, as the mob surged up to the door. They took the £5, and then made short work of the defences, and broke into the house, blew out the candles as fast as the shopwoman lit them, and began to smash up the furniture. Upstairs was the widow Waddelow, with a neighbouring farmer’s wife to keep her company. One of the rioters, the man with the cleaver, swung it over her head, but did not touch her. “Spare my life!” shrieked the poor woman, and at her request the neighbour handed the men the £1 notes. After smashing the clock and the furniture, the mob carried off from the shop “twenty yards of woollen stuff at 9d. a yard, 5 or 6 lbs. of tea at 8s. the pound, a sugar loaf, a bottle of vinegar, and a quantity of brown sugar,” as the shop-serving woman was careful to note. Moreover, they carried off from the well-stocked bureau fourteen of Mr. Martin’s shirts, “worth a guinea a-piece,”

and generally made such havoc that a neighbouring farmer "hadn't the heart to go into the house after they left."

From Martin's the mob went to the house of a retired farmer, named Josiah Dewey, and when the old man and his wife came to the door, money was demanded, a rush was made through the door, the old man and woman were knocked down, and after the mob had gone he missed from a bureau two boxes containing 100 guineas. The next house (Robert Speechley's) was visited at 10.30 p.m. The old man was too much upset to remember what happened, and went to bed as soon as he could, being very infirm, but the servant girl remembered the swinging of the cleaver over the head of her mistress, who gave them four 3s. pieces, but they demanded notes, and got two £1 notes, and carried away linen, china, and silver spoons.

In one case, probably one of the above, it is said that as the only means of satisfying the demands of the mob, the wary but now frightened householder had to fetch in one of the children, a girl, from her hiding-place in one of the hemp-fields, and unstitch the notes from her dress and give them up after all! Still, the mad riot went on, and a move was made for the house of the parson, the Rev. J. Vachell, who was also a magistrate, where they arrived at 11 p.m. The parson gave them two £1 notes, but they said "£2 would be of no use, they must have £10." He told them he hadn't £10 to give them, and placed himself at the door armed with a pistol, threatening to shoot anyone who would attempt to enter, when three men rushed upon him and disarmed him. He ran upstairs to his wife and two daughters, who, with very slight covering, made their escape with him, running nearly all the way to Ely, where they arrived safe at midnight. The mob entered the house, played havoc with the furniture, and, it was alleged, carried off silver spoons brought there for another family for greater safety.

THE GREAT GUNS OF ARCADY.

But the romance of this curious revolt was yet to come. Having put their hands to the plough in their daring enterprise, and succeeded in getting possession of the unaccustomed luxury of a number of £1 notes, the rioters found they had gone too far to turn back. There was yet the prospect of the mills and shops of Ely, and, if they should have the misfortune to encounter one of those "military detachments" which the Government had sent out to "likely seats of disorder," or the little troops of yeomanry cavalry which some of the neighbours had taken pride in raising, there was the last argument of despair in the thought that they might "as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb." With this thought uppermost, the clubmen, with their ill-assorted weapons, went forward into the night. They began to think and put a little method into their campaign. If they should happen to meet the King's soldiers, they saw that they must get something more substantial than the long pole and piece of "printed stuff," with clubs, pitchforks, and an occasional blunderbuss behind it.

Some Cromwell, hitherto "guiltless of his country's blood," bethought him of siege guns and artillery, and a commander who could talk with the enemy in the gate, and the idea began to take definite shape. John Dennis, apparently a publican and a small farmer, was a man of substance enough to keep a servant, yet evidently in sympathy with the objects for which the revolt began. To his house, therefore, the mob made their way in the night-time for guidance and supplies. First they came "for bullets," and then came again three times and pressed Dennis to go with them; in fact, they said they "would shoot him" if he would not, if the poor frightened servant girl did not mistake what they did say. At last poor Dennis

got out of bed, dressed, and went with them—whether “reluctantly” and “under constraint,” as his friends would have it, let him answer to the Judges at Ely in due season. The raid for arms, powder, and bullets went on in the darkness. From the shop of Mr. Stephen Wiles, after exacting £10, “they took all his gunpowder and shot of the value of about £11,” and at other houses everything in the shape of a gun was secured. Among the arms got together were several of the old swivel pieces, old punt guns used for wildfowl shooting — formidable weapons, with barrels eight feet long, whose charge was no less than a pound, or at any rate “five pipes” of powder and shot. For transport, they got possession of a waggon and two horses, and upon that waggon they mounted the old punt guns, “deeply loaded.” Altogether about 60 out of a number of 200 men or more, and some women, had a gun of some kind, and the rest were armed with such weapons as they could lay hands upon.

No one in Littleport slept that night, for its quaint old streets on the fringe of the Ouse continued all through the hours of darkness a seething little pandemonium, in which uncouth things were being straightened out to unwonted purposes, as by the lighting of bobbing, flickering lanterns, the strange but resolute little army was gradually taking shape for the impending march on the city of Ely. Just as day was breaking, there emerged at the south end of the quaint little town the oddest little cavalcade upon which the sun had ever risen. At the head of the procession was still the tall pole with the bit of printed stuff for a flag, but now it waved proudly over something more formidable than a pair of legs in corduroy. It waved aloft in front of that waggon which now supported the great guns of Arcady, “deeply loaded,” with their pound of powder and bullets to match, and leaving the wildfowl at rest, headed the fighting force of 200 men, more or less armed from pitchforks to artillery; while inside the waggon, behind the guns, were

placed the women, to give a touch of reality to the plea for redress with which, like the greater revolutions of history, the revolt began. With the rising sun behind them, and going with them, they saw the towers of Ely five miles away, looming clearer and clearer as the dark grey twilight of morning was now receding westward. Whatever the omen might have meant for them, the ragged little cavalcade of surging discontent moved on through the sunlit mist of a May morning, with no misgivings, though it might be into the lions' den they were marching.

Within the city of Ely, the official mind had caught a glimpse of that midnight apparition of the parson of Littleport and his ill-clad wife and daughters, frightened out of their beds, and tramping five miles through the Fens to seek a refuge in this Mecca of officialism, with its shops and its flour-mills, towards which the coming storm was already bending. The city of Ely awoke that morning to the wildest consternation. Utterly unprepared to resist any attack from without, it had a good number of its own people ready to welcome and make common cause with the invaders. It was a part of life's little ironies, even more than it is to-day, that the Ministers of the Gospel of peace and forgiveness were very generally entrusted with the punishment of the guilty, and among the official agents who were early astir that morning were two clergymen, Magistrates of Ely, in the Rev. Mr. Metcalf and the Rev. Mr. Law. At sunrise they, with Mr. Edwards, the Chief Constable, and others, walked out along the Littleport Road, and there met the curiously formidable medley of men, women, pitchforks, clubs, guns, and artillery.

About three-quarters of a mile outside the city, the reverend magistrates and the chief constable met the head of the procession, and desired to know what was the reason for their "disorderly conduct," to which they made cool, diplomatic reply, "that they came for redress from the magistrates." "Wages at 2s. a day, flour at

2s. 6d. a stone," and "beer at 2d. a pint," added a thirsty one in the crowd. They were told that their complaints should be examined by the overseers, for which purpose the magistrates entered into a sort of treaty with them, and urged them to conduct themselves peaceably. They said they had not come "to hurt anybody," but when told they had much better go back home, they, having little faith in the old arrangement, and staking all upon the issue, made answer that they "might as well be hanged as starved," and one Rutter, seeing the clergymen, magistrates, and men of the law by their side, said "they might, if they pleased, hang him up on the next thorn bush."

So the parley ended ; the reverend magistrates retired into the shadow of the Cathedral, and the strange procession, with its old fowling-pieces still pointing ominously ahead, "commanding the street," entered the city between 5 and 6 o'clock in the morning, with heads everywhere looking out of windows in sheer wonder and consternation at the scene. Forward went the old lumbering waggon, drawn by two heavy farm horses—assuredly never so employed before—and the motley throng filled all the street, and tried their weapons upon doors and windows, spreading alarm, uproar, and curiosity as they went along. At the Market Square they halted, the armoured waggon was placed in position, and then the camp-followers came hurrying up to swell the hurly-burly ; some of them to actively sympathize, and others to look on.

Leaving a strong guard with the heavy gunners and the waggon, the main body, with their lighter armour, set off to reconnoitre the city of Ely, which was thrown into great excitement. "For some time they exercised complete dominion over the city, and at length determined to levy contributions." By this time the rioters included Littleport, Downham, and Ely people, and a move was made towards the house of Mr. William Rickwood, a miller. The miller was not at home, and his Dame Margaret

went to the door, and there saw Dennis, the Littleport publican, armed with a gun, and others armed with "stable forks and bludgeons." When the good woman told them her husband was not at home, and asked them what they wished, somebody called out that they "must have £50, or the house and mill would come down immediately." Young Rickwood, a son, suggested 'beer,' but they said "beer would not do." "My good man," said Dame Rickwood, "you shall have it, but don't break or destroy anything," and sent off her son for Mr. Edwards, manager of Mortlock's Bank, for the £50.

The mob was now getting impatient, and Dennis told her he could not quell them unless the money was forthcoming. 'Crack' went the windows, and the Dame called out—"You shall have the money, for I see I am going to ruin." So she set off with them up Broad Street to the Bank. Now it happened that the manager at the Bank was none other than the Chief Constable Edwards, and she had not gone far before she met the man of authority armed with his staff. He requested her to "take his arm," and valiantly declared that "if there were a thousand of them they should not have a penny!" But Dame Rickwood had promised them the money, and begged that it might be taken out of the Bank and divided equally between the Ely, Littleport, and Downham men.

The Chief Constable and Bank manager got a knock on the head, and then with Dame Rickwood hanging on his arm for protection, he turned back towards the Bank, where the man of authority and law set his back against the Bank doors and resolved that nobody should enter. The crowd drew round him and he received a blow, and yielded upon the condition that three of them only should come into the Bank and receive the money for the rest. Three of the leaders, one for Littleport, one for Downham, and one for Ely, ventured into the wily constable's trap, and each gave his name on receiving a third of £50—

sixteen £1 notes and thirteen shillings to each man, and then they insisted upon dividing the odd shilling and receiving a groat each! Dennis for Littleport, Hopkins for Downham, and Sanderson for Ely, were the recipients, and that £50 was debited to Mr. Rickwood's account in the Banker's books, and the formal transaction became a piece of local history, and what was more to the purpose, evidence against the three men later on.

From Rickwood's mill and Mortlock's Bank the mob went to the mill of George Stevens in Ely, and something of the old treaty spirit of the early morning returned. Stevens asked them how much they wanted, and Dennis replied that they must have "as much from him as from the other miller—£50. Stevens said he thought it hard that he should be compelled to give so much, as he had already given something to relieve the Littleport people." They then reduced their terms to £10, and Stevens, with £8 in his pocket, borrowed the other £2, and satisfied the demand. William Cooper had the misfortune to keep a shop and to deal in flour and grocery, and here, as at Widow Waddelow's at Littleport, a raid was made. Windows were broken and there were shouts of "Five pounds! Five pounds!" Cooper handed five £1 notes to Mr. Metcalf, the magistrate, to give them, but as this got into the hands of a Littleport man, the Ely faction demanded £5 also, which was given them "in fear of his house being pulled down," and his promptitude was rewarded by "three huzzas" from the crowd as they went away!

RETRIBUTION.

When the parson of Littleport with his terrified wife and daughters arrived at Ely, in the night, the exciting story they had to tell soon woke up the placid life of the Cathedral precincts, and the Rev. Sir Bate Dudley, Prebendary of Ely, and other clerical magistrates, finding that a march upon Ely was intended, got together a council

of war, and a mounted messenger was despatched in the darkness for Bury St. Edmunds, the nearest military depôt for soldiers to meet the expected attack. The Commandant did not like to weaken his forces at Bury by running after every little outbreak, but when it was urged that the state of things was serious he allowed a small band of 18th Dragoon Guards to go. But a stronger force was on the way from a different quarter—the “Royston Troop of Volunteer Cavalry,” a survival of the anti-Napoleon risings of a few years before. The soldiers did not arrive, however, until the afternoon, and the ragged peasant army of the Fens, after ‘holding’ the city throughout the day, found that some of the resolution with which they set up their standard had fizzled out, and when, shortly afterwards, the cavalry came riding into Ely along the Cambridge Road, the peasant army had melted away. The Ely men had slunk away into their homes or the back ways of the city, and the Littleport and Downham men had beat a retreat northwards through the Fens, the way they came. But they had only fallen back upon their base in the country around Littleport and Downham, and must be followed and beaten at all hazards.

On Friday morning the city of Ely was all agog with military and civil preparations to return the compliment by a march on Littleport. The Dragoon Guards who had fought at Waterloo, the Volunteer Cavalry, and “a very respectable number of the gentlemen and inhabitants of Ely,” set out during the afternoon along the five miles march to Littleport, along which the great guns of Arcady had travelled. Arriving at Littleport, “a very severe” struggle ensued between them and the rioters, who had secreted themselves in different houses, and were armed with guns with which they fired on the military and severely wounded some of the soldiers. The military then received orders to “fire,” and “killed one of the rioters, and another lost the lower part of his face and part of his

tongue." Around the man who was killed popular tradition has woven a pathetic tragedy, and the official mind evolved a verdict of "justifiable homicide." The rioters were completely disconcerted and fled in every direction. In the hot pursuit, when the firing had ceased, two of the Littleport men jumped into a boat and placed the River Ouse between them and their pursuers, but the Dragoons were equal to the occasion, for, giving their horses into the charge of a bystander, they plunged into the water, holding their pistols above their heads in their left hands, and swimming with their right, they reached the opposite bank and secured their men.

And so, after hunting the raiders through the Fens, the soldiers, with Prebendary Sir Bate Dudley and his "gentlemen and inhabitants of Ely," took back with them and lodged in Ely gaol no less than seventy-three of the raiders, and many who were taken were liberated in the belief that they had been forced to join the mob. But in its old quarters at Southery and Downham the revolt was still smouldering. The hungry peasants from Southery had, on the very day of the pursuit at Littleport, been swarming again into the streets of Downham, "in consequence of their demand not being complied with." They not only insisted upon 2s. per day for their labour, but had the temerity to demand to be paid for the two days—Monday and Tuesday—when engaged in driving out the justices from their Court House at the "Crown," and raiding the mills and shops of Downham; and also fixed their price for bread and flour, etc. But the Magistrates tried the former remedy of sending for the Upwell troop of Yeomanry again. The soldiers came in about 7 o'clock in the evening, and a number of prisoners were secured, examined, and committed for trial, and the Swaffham and other troops of Yeomanry remained to defend the town.

Wisbech was openly threatened the next day (Saturday),

but the appearance of the March, Upwell, and Whittlesea Yeomanry, "fully equipped," and the account of what had happened at Littleport, kept things quiet in that quarter. For some days the pursuit and search for the Littleport men were carried on by the soldiery, who hunted the now defenceless and dispirited raiders through the Fens with the utmost rigour. The tradition is still current that one inoffensive thatcher was engaged upon the roof of the great tithe-barn in Ely, when a detachment of soldiers under a German officer was marching past. The thatcher called out to his server at the foot of the ladder "Bunch, bunch!" which the German officer interpreted as an insult to his troops! He called a halt, and ordered his troops to fire, and, pierced with a dozen musket balls, the unhappy thatcher rolled from the roof, his body falling upon the great folding door of the barn, which happened to be half open. There it hung, dripping with blood, for three days, the officer swearing that anyone who dared to remove it should share the same fate, as an example to all to behave with the respect due to their oppressors!

The old newspapers of the time speak of the jury finding a verdict of "justifiable homicide" upon "the rioter who was killed," leaving it doubtful whether it was the man killed in the fray at Littleport or the traditional thatcher at Ely, but the tradition of a man killed on a barn survives at Royston, whose Volunteer Cavalry assisted in suppressing the revolt. As for the soldiers of the 18th Dragoons from Bury St. Edmunds, who had heard Wellington's "Up, Guards, and at them!" if ever he said it, at Waterloo, one lost his arm at Littleport. He "had been in the battle of Waterloo and in many other general engagements without receiving the slightest wound, and lamented the fact that he should at last receive one from his own countrymen!"

Meanwhile, the official mind in the city of Ely was being taxed to its utmost capacity. The Magistrates sat day after day, formulating charges and taking evidence against the

unprecedented haul of prisoners, about seventy of whom remained in custody, charged with capital offences, after twenty-four had been liberated on their own recognizances, having the benefit of the opinion that they had been "pressed into this desperate service." By the end of May about forty of the prisoners had been committed for trial, but some thirty-five more had yet to be examined, and the tedious business continued. At last the aching hands of the clerk laid down the pen, the huge sheaf of depositions was tied up with red tape, and with the prisoners now committed for trial at the Assizes, and the "long swivel pieces, wild fowl guns, and other arms, about 60 in number," placed as a trophy "on the wall of the military dépôt," like the farmer's moles on the barley barn doors, the Magistrates found that the Dragoons might go back to Cambridge and the artillery to Newmarket, and so the people of Ely slept in peace once more.

For the trial of so many prisoners, a special Assize was appointed at Ely, before Mr. Justice Abbott, Mr. Justice Burrough, and the chief Justice of the Isle of Ely, Mr. Justice Christian. The whole sitting and surroundings of this memorable Assize open up another chapter in the romance of revolution, which by artfully contrived stage effects heightens for us who look upon the scene from a distance the tragi-comedy of the events. Here on the very spot at Ely, where the hungry, hollow-eyed little revolution of the Fenmen so confidently set up its quaint standard, and then, frightened at its own shadow, fizzled out in mingled fear and wretchedness at the first approach of disciplined troops—here in those dim Cathedral aisles through which the holy strain of charity had rippled down the ages, the dead, soulless shell of the officialism of the Georgian era set out its own glorification with pæans which sound to modern ears very like the old heathen cry of "Great Dagon rules the world in state."

Inside the narrow cells of the old gaol at Ely, sixty or

seventy working men, not hot-headed youth, but for the most part men of middle life, were languishing in the shadow of the gallows for having made so strangely and unjustifiably articulate the cry of their fellows for more than eighteenpence a day's wages and that bread should be less than a shilling the loaf. Outside in the bright Summer sunshine on the Monday morning, 17th of June, was an enormous crowd, drawn from all parts of the Fens to witness the famous trial, to gossip, and to speculate about how many would "swing for it." Met by a great cavalcade, the judges, "preceded by fifty of the principal inhabitants on foot with white wands to clear the way," went to the Court House and opened the Commission; thence the procession returned to Palace Green, where the judges "breakfasted with the Bishop," with running comments from the discontented ones in the crowd outside.

From the Bishop's Palace, in due course, the fringe of white wands, the cavalcade, the judges, and the Bishop with his sword of state carried by his butler, made their way to the Cathedral. Here the Precentor, the Rev. W. Metcalf, who had gone out at sunrise to parley with the armoured Fenmen advancing along the Littleport Road on that eventful morning, was appointed to lead the service. Could that unhappy company in the cells of the old gaol have heard the echoes, they would have heard that even music may carry a sting, for the choir performed "Handel's beautiful air." "Why do the heathen rage so furiously together," with the chorus, "Let us break their bands asunder." They would have heard, too, the Prebendary, the Rev. Sir H. B. Dudley, in an "animated and impressive manner" pile up the agony and fill their cup to the brim, by discoursing upon the text, "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." They would have heard, too, in anticipation of the triumph of the law which was to crush them, in the

singing of the "Hallelujah Chorus," with which the service concluded, and then the muffled thunder of the surging crowd around the Court as the white wands, the cavalcade, and the Judges entered the Judgment Hall.

Day after day, for six days, the raiders were set up at the bar in batches, often the same men over again under different indictments, feeling the terror of the law with the gallows looming behind it; hearing legal jargon which bandied their lives, now this side, now that, like pawns upon a chess-board; acquitted by the jury on one point only to find themselves charged upon another, until the meshes of the law grew so small that no way of escape seemed possible. Chief Justice Christian was able to fortify the jury with the advice that "stealing to the value of 40s." in a dwelling-house, with or without inspiring fear in any present, was a capital offence; and when attended with the infliction of any terror, if the value of what was stolen only amounted to 1s., the capital part of the charge could be sustained!

After a trial lasting six days, twenty-four of the prisoners were set up at the bar, their lives forfeit by the legal pundit's "forty shillings and fear" rather than by any actual violence. They were addressed by Justice Abbott as "melancholy examples of the sad effects of indulging in brutal passions," and the great unwieldy arm of the law came down upon a select number of "examples"—human scarecrows to frighten all the rest—and five were "left for execution," while nineteen received mitigated sentences. Five were sentenced to transportation for life, one to fourteen years, three for seven years, and ten for twelve months in the County Gaol, while nearly forty of the other prisoners in the calendar* were bound over to be of good behaviour.

* The calendar of prisoners, which is before me as I write, contains the names of 62 persons, not 75, as given in one of the old newspapers. The youngest among the batch was only 16 years of age, and the oldest 60, while a good number were between 30 and 40, and at least five were between 40 and 50 years of age.

Chief Justice Christian, as the head of the law in the Isle, in an address which the magistrates around him thought should be printed, extolled the usual law-abiding character of the people of the Fens, through which he had at several Courts not had a single prisoner to try, and had charged and discharged the Grand Jury in "white gloves presented to him as an emblem of the innocence and purity of the Isle." He found that most of the unfortunate criminals on this occasion had, "till the commission of these outrages," had "the best of characters as peaceable and honest men," and he consoled himself and the official mind generally that "these extraordinary crimes could not be attributed in a spirit of disaffection to the Government prevailing in this Isle." It was particularly pleasing to him "to see the judges every day escorted to and from the Court by a numerous body of independent gentlemen as civil officers with white wands."

The independent gentlemen with their white wands accompanied the judges out of the town, and the crowd melted away only to reassemble in larger numbers outside Ely six days later, when the five "melancholy examples" of the power of the law were to be brought out for execution. Sympathy with the unfortunate men was still widespread, and the Bishop could get no one to provide the fatal cart under five guineas for the journey. The doomed men were: John Dennis (32), who reluctantly assumed the rôle of leader of the mob, and more than once restrained them, William Beamiss the elder (42), Isaac Harley (33), George Crow (23), and Thomas South the younger (22).

Sitting on elevated seats in that five-guinea cart, covered with black cloth, the five men, wearing "white caps tied with black ribbons," were drawn from the gaol to the fatal platform outside the city with all the official pomp which could be obtained from three hundred inhabitants on horseback carrying "white wands," with

the magistrates, all the Peace officers, and the wily Mr. Edwards, Chief Constable and Bank manager, and "three other chief constables, with their staff of office covered with black crape!" The spectacle as the condemned men ascended the platform was "awful and impressive on the surrounding multitude." The vast crowd had the morbid satisfaction of a 'confession' from the five men, signed by Dennis and Beamiss, the other three making their marks. Dennis made a short speech to the crowd, and in melodramatic key urged them to be warned by the "melancholy example of the power of justice and the law," and the bodies of the five men, after hanging the appointed time, were given to their friends and interred next day in St. Mary's Churchyard at Ely.

The official mind once more assumed as far as possible its normal self-complacency, feasted with a "handsome treat of roast beef and plum-pudding" the Dragoon Guards from Waterloo, who had come to the rescue of a powerless officialism, commended the Militia and the Yeomanry for their exemplary conduct, sent out a number of prisoners to Botany Bay, and attached to the wall of St. Mary's Church, Ely, above a certain grave, this inscription: "Here lye in one grave the bodies of William Beamiss, George Crow, John Dennis, Isaac Harley, and Thomas South, who were all executed at Ely on the 28th day of June, 1816, having been convicted at the special Assizes holden there of divers robberies during the riots at Ely and Littleport in the month of May in that year. May their awful fate be a warning to others!" Thus ended on its material side one of the saddest little tragedies in fustian which the sorrows of Arcady have ever compassed.

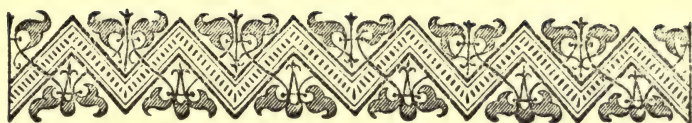
But the ghost of the murdered Fenmen still lingered and refused to be 'laid,' much to the concern of the aforesaid official mind, which at last, when it was too late, got an inkling that possibly its own supineness had been in some

degree accountable for the deplorable array of pitchforks in the wrong place. "The disorderly conduct of the lower classes is doubtless due in a great measure, owing to the habits produced by the existing system of the Poor-laws." Precisely, and if to this you add the awful harvest of war which the country was then reaping, you touch the bottom of this little social quagmire in which the Fenmen and others were struggling for dear life.

With eighteenpence a day, when the farmers could employ him, and bread at 1s. a loaf, the peasant of 1816 got one loaf where the peasant of to-day can get three. No wonder that the strain at last became too great to bear, and that some of them rose in revolt, not against the "higher orders" as the official mind was prone to imagine, but for sheer daily bread. Like the faithful, patient beast of burden, Arcady held on to the very harness which had produced, and therefore fitted to, her deformities, and would even fight against all machinery for the privilege of swinging the flail for daily bread and of creeping back to Mother Earth at last with the bent back of the 'tasker,' as her fathers had done before her! The history of rural England presents few more pathetic pictures than this, and the romance of it lies in the fact that Arcady, while trying to copy in its primitive way the only successful means of resistance it knew of—the resistance of war—still had its heart in the right place; for with all its masquerade and warlike array of pitchforks and punt guns, it did absolutely no violence to the weak and unprotected who were for the moment at its mercy. In one case it is related that a farmer pleaded the dying condition of his son as a reason for being left in peace, and the raiders, "with some expression of sympathy for the sorrowing father," went on and left his house untouched. That five men, even the leaders in such a revolt, should have been hanged upon the gallows, to say nothing of the awful little barn-door tragedy at Ely, the blood of which, like the dark stain

of Napoleon through the leaves of the old parish books, coloured old men's memories far and wide all through the century—that all this was justifiable homicide, as the official mind declared it to be, was truly a “melancholy example of the power of the law,” in an age when the life of the poor was put into the scales against forty shillings of the “higher orders,” which the poor man's labour had earned.





CHAPTER V.

THE ROMANCE OF OLD COUNTRY LIFE.

FOR very much that may now seem odd, quaint, and curious in old country life, and in old town life, too, you have only to turn over the fossil remains of forms and usages which have merely grown out of date, or been superseded by the course of time, and the altered condition of things which has followed in its train; but for the spirit of romance and the humour of contrast, you must look rather to the ideas at work behind the fossils; for in this direction you will find a strange mixture of impotence and power, of aims which seem to have had little apparent connection with the necessities of the times, but too often directed 'at the moon' when there was immediately in front a substantial 'tree' that might have been hit. Besides this there was a whole chapter of romance in the tax-gatherer's wallet, and still more along the highway of life, and in its trials and its crimes. From the drunken brawler bundled into the stocks to get sober, to the melodramatic scene where a great morbid crowd waited in front of Newgate, or the county gaol in some provincial assize town, for the last dying speech and confession of the criminal about to be hanged—the great clumsy arm of the law, moved by its infamous penal code, would crush the first victim it caught and set him up as a moral scarecrow, or "melancholy example of the power of the law," and

often hung a man for a little offence as if to make up for its incompetence in failing to catch a greater offender.

Between the parish constable, who carried the 'hue and cry' to the next parish, and charged 6*d.* on the parish books for his trouble, and the 'Bow Street Runner,' there was a great gap in the meshes of the law, through which a whole squadron of professional highwaymen might ride two or three abreast. If the well-to-do could not thus be sure of security from wrong, the poor would have been in a sorry plight, but for the fact that their very poverty was their shield; and yet all through the early decades of the century the sorrows of the poor in country districts were embittered by experiences which suggest mingled feelings of romance and of pity, in that the tired worker went to his long home leaving his friends not even the assurance that his bones would be allowed to rest in peace.

In the early years of the century, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had his hands in everyone's pocket, for the taxes were levied in a way which took toll upon almost every necessary of life, at a time when there were only too few luxuries. The result was that the very poorest felt the burden, and with a guinea a bushel duty on salt, and its price 6*d.* a pound, no wonder men of economical turn sometimes, even at public gatherings, would carefully replace a portion of the precious commodity if too much were taken on the plate. Upon almost every article with which people were familiar the tax-gatherer had his fingers—"windows, candles, tobacco pipes, almanacks, soap, newspapers, hats, bricks, domestic servants, watches, clocks, hair-powder, besides nearly every article of food." To the eye of Sydney Smith, the grievances of the people from the cradle to the grave had their humorous side, at a time when "the schoolboy had to whip a taxed top, the youth drove a taxed horse with a taxed bridle along a taxed road, the old man poured medicine which had paid

7 per cent. into a spoon that had paid 22 per cent., and expired into the arms of an apothecary who had paid a licence of £100 for the privilege of putting him to death, and immediately his property paid 2 to 10 per cent., and his virtues were handed down to posterity on taxed marble."

Perhaps the most daring flight of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the time was to lay hands upon the tresses of beauty and fashion, in the form of hair-powder certificates, for which men and women desiring to appear in fashion were willing to pay a guinea a head, excepting that paterfamilias, with a bevy of girls around him, was able to see them all turn out with hair powdered for two guineas, all above two daughters being free. The Royal Family and their servants were free, Army and Navy Officers were exempt, and also the clergy and dissenting ministers with less than £100 a year, upon which it was observed by a wit of the time, that "it is somewhat singular that those whose particular province it is to preach against the vanities of the world should have the privilege of being vain by Act of Parliament, while their hearers cannot indulge their vanity without paying for it." There were other taxes upon the patience of the people in their homes for which the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not responsible. Of these the tinder-box was apt to become the greatest, when, for instance, sleep was disturbed by the baby crying in the night, and the tinder in the box was hopelessly damp, and would not take the fugitive spark produced by the striking together of the flint and the steel.

But while our grandfathers and grandmothers were fettered by many things in their daily lives at home, they were fairly stuck in the ruts along which communication had to be made with their neighbours and with distant towns and markets. When the farmer had put up his corn for market at many of the off farms of rural England,

a desperate struggle had to be faced, with lanterns blinking and wheels creaking, to get the loaded waggons and carts on the highway over-night ready for starting the journey to market in the morning, for corn was not bought so generally by sample as it is to-day. Even the high roads into the town were often in a sorry plight, and when the ruts were so deep that the wheels of the waggon would not turn round, "faggots from 12 to 14 feet long were placed in them, and renewed as they were worn away by traffic." Into these deep ruts and the quagmires which formed in the hollows at the bottom of the hills over which the high road passed, the old coaches and 'fly waggons' plunged and often got helplessly stuck, until ten or a dozen stout horses from neighbouring farms were requisitioned for their deliverance.



FLY WAGGON.

The state of the great roads running through the country was incredibly bad in Winter time, and the wonder is, not that the speed of the old coaches and goods waggons was so slow, but that they ever reached their destination at all. The older coaches did not travel at a very giddy pace, but as early as 1806 improvements had begun, and a writer in one of the old magazines broke forth in this

ecstatic strain over the enterprise which was bringing about such achievements: "Who would have conceived it possible that fifty years ago a coach would regularly travel between London and Edinburgh, nearly 400 miles, in less than three days!" Truly it was a great performance if it came off, which was not always the case when the snow drifted. By 1836 a Parliamentary return gives the highest speed of family coaches as $10\frac{3}{4}$ miles an hour in England, $10\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour in Scotland, and 9 miles an hour in Ireland. But the condition of the lesser cross-country roads, even in the palmy days of coaching, must have been very bad, as is shown by the figures for the lowest rates of speed—6 miles an hour for England, 7 miles an hour in Scotland, and 6 an hour in Ireland. A long journey by coach was thus a formidable experience, as young Nicholas Nickleby found, with his blue legs dangling over the side of the coach, as an outside passenger, on that memorable ride to Squeers' Academy in Yorkshire.

Fortunately, the poor rarely had occasion to travel long distances, but when they did their case was much worse. Third-class to London in those days simply meant a seat among the heavy packages beneath the tilted roof of the old 'fly waggon,' lumbering along on its broad wheels, drawn by eight horses with a driver mounted on his pony by the side of his team. In that position they travelled at the customary speed of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 miles, sitting patiently day and night until the long journey ended with a welcome glimpse of the dazzling splendour of the 'lights of London' in "the long rows of oil lamps which then lit up Kingsland Road" and similar entrances to the Metropolis. The setting up of turnpikes along the great highways, though obstacles to traffic—like the tollman who at Marble Arch presided over the traffic of Oxford Street until swept away by the great human tide—did enable the Turnpike Trusts to carry out notable improvements, in the lowering of

hills by the deep cuttings, such as those through the Chiltern Hills, which barred the road to London from the north and north-west.

For those who had the means to travel frequently, and for many a dinner-party returning from balls, and "polite assemblies elegantly conducted," which broke the monotony and graced the old country social life when the century was young, there were other little amenities which had to be faced besides quagmires and tollgates by the way. In this quaint fashion Farmer Carrington wrote in his Hertfordshire diary when the nineteenth century was only six years old: "Sunday, 17th August. Not to church as being lame—as rung of ladder broke and hurt my leg—but to Tewin in the evening to take money of Insome, the sack carrier, for wheat sold yesterday. Spent there with him and Jos. Lowin in gin and water 2s., but was robbed [robbed] as I came home by two Irishmen; they clapt a pistoll to my head. I told them my puss was in my wascoat pocket, which they took . . . they said I had more money. I told them I had no more in very loud terms . . . so off they went. I run and hollowed down to Marden. So I escaped with my other money, nearly £20, in a little pocket in the lining of my coat . . . so my loss was small, about 4s. in my puss."

But Farmer Carrington, who forgot to go to church in his anxiety about the price of wheat and the amount due to him from the previous day's deal in Hertford Market—and then apparently forgot his lameness in his hurry to get out of the clutches of the Irishmen—was not the usual type of victim pitched upon by the 'gentlemen of the road.' A short time before he had recorded that little adventure in his diary, there was a great crowd assembled one morning before the County Gaol at Chelmsford, waiting to see two men hanged. One of them was a young man whose extraordinary exploits on the road had whetted the appetite of the crowd for the customary "dying speech

and confession." But the young man's short career had been too full of incidents to receive adequate treatment in a speech from the gallows ; the expectant crowd went away disappointed with the exhibition, but when the body was cut down there was found in the pocket of the young man a very remarkable document. It was, in fact, the autobiography of a highwayman whose career of romance and crime illustrates what travelling along highways at night really meant at a time when to be robbed was almost a commonplace experience, and the capture of the highwaymen the exception to the rule, under which the 'romance of the road' flourished exceedingly.

Born at Woodford, and apprenticed to a carpenter, John Morris had run away to sea, deserted the service, and taken to the 'road,' if not in the orthodox Claude Duval and Dick Turpin style of the melodrama, at any rate in a fashion that had made his career a fit subject for the curiosity of the morbid crowd around the place of execution. Of his first exploit on the Epping Road, he tells, in the polite phraseology of the road, that "we stopped two gentlemen and took ten guineas and one watch, and the same night we spoke to a gentleman and lady for all they had. Then we were 'advertised.'" But the advertisement did not answer, for the highwayman went on board a man of war, and received a bounty for enlistment, remained three months, robbed an old seaman of his money just as he had been paid, and then made his appearance once more on the road with exploits in the country about Romford, Enfield, and Maidstone in Kent, "where we did eleven or twelve robberies, but the place was spoiled," and he returned to Romford where his 'pal' died. With another he went "on the forest" (Epping Forest), and "near the highstone we spoke to a post chaise with a lady and gentleman in it for eleven guineas and two watches ; and the same evening we spoke to a gentleman on horseback for £21 and a thimble. Between

Newington and Islington we spoke to a post chaise with two gentlemen in it. They fired off a blunderbuss and shot my pal in the arm, but we spoke to them for forty-two guineas and got clear into the town."

Then followed intervals of service in the Army and Navy, and desertions for the old profession, and the record continues—"We spoke to a gentleman and two ladies for two guineas and a half and a watch, but were pursued and nearly captured in Hyde Park." After 'speaking to' a gentleman on horseback for three guineas and some silver, his 'pal' was taken prisoner, and he joined another to "work the London and Chatham road." Here he had the temerity to attack an old sea captain—"Spoke to a captain of a man of war for seventeen guineas and his watch, but he fired two pistols at us; one of the slugs went through the crown of my hat, and we wounded him in the arm." For these they were advertised, and Morris resorted to the old dodge of joining the Navy, receiving a bounty of ten guineas, and then ran away again, only to be tried as a deserter from the Tower Militia. A sentence of the 'cat' he somehow escaped, and fell in with Sanders, his companion on the gallows, and together they came to the inglorious end of being sentenced to death for breaking open a shop near his old home at Woodford. At the end of the strange record the adventurer gives a recapitulation of his career, which would have rounded off the dying speech and confession for the itching ears of the Essex crowd.

"I, John Morris, have been in five different regiments, three of foot and two of horse, and have been on board seven different men of War, and have been in three engagements at sea, all this War. My father was a carpenter in the same village where I was born, and he died before I knew him, and my mother died when I was two years old. The most pockets that I ever picked was at the Assizes at Chelmsford two years ago last March,

but they were only handkerchiefs, and one watch [then follows a recapitulation of bounties received on different ships and a classification of offences]. All the houses that I have been concerned in breaking open is 11—5 in Essex, 2 in Hertfordshire, 2 in Middlesex, and 2 in Kent; and all the pals that I have been concerned with is 18 in number. Highway robberies, 67 in number. Two houses I broke open by myself in Essex, and out-houses, barns, and stables, 20. Twenty - five I done myself on the highway with horses.”

And so dramatic justice was at last satisfied when the daring highwayman, burglar, thief, and pickpocket was hanged in the town where only two years before he had, on his own confession, committed the largest number of offences, and the last act which brought him to the gallows was committed at the place of his birth.

No wonder the crowd waited eagerly for that speech, and that the old newspapers of the time printed every word of the voluminous document found in the dead man's pocket after execution. That such a career was possible, and that it should have been continued so long unchecked, throws a lurid light upon the state of things our grandfathers and grandmothers had to face when setting out for a journey in the early days of the century, and also how little really effective protection they received from the old parochial ‘hue and cry’ of the parish constable and the after-thoughts of the Bow Street Runner.

It was not alone on the highway that the public had little or no security from the robber, for the Governor of the Bank of England had to confess that not more than one conviction to over 100 forgeries of bank-notes was secured during the first quarter of the new century, and a similar state of things prevailed in regard to crimes against property all through the country districts.

Forty years after John Morris had ‘swung’ before the

great crowd at Chelmsford, His Majesty William IV was appointing a Commission to inquire into the best means of establishing a trained force of police, and the reports of the evidence taken by the Commission disclosed a state of things that seems almost incredible. In these reports may be seen the confessions of criminals in various 'walks' of life,—how the burglar frankly criticized the simplicity of the householder's contributory negligence; how the hawker, fresh from Coldbath prison, set up in business by stealing a 'dog-cart' and two dogs to draw it, and a stock-in-trade of brooms, and, equipped with some bad money, set out through the country in business again, wherein everything was fish that came to the net; how, too, in an Essex parish twenty sheep were slaughtered in a single year on one farm, within a radius of two miles from the farmhouse, and no one was captured. In the parish of Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire the average was one sheep a fortnight, and yet the depredators invariably escaped the 'hue and cry' of the constable, and the great arm of the law on the gallows which would have been their doom if captured.

On the other hand, the reports of the Commission show how men in sheer self-defence, tired of looking to the law to protect them, formed voluntary associations for prosecuting felons—500 such associations throughout the country—and how some little enterprising parish at last subscribed for, and obtained the services of, a policeman all its own—a smart trained man down from London. In this way about 200 members of the Metropolitan Force had been sent down into the rural districts, with a remarkable diminution of crime in the parish which subscribed for them—the average sheep a fortnight stolen previously at Stow-on-the-Wold dwindled down almost to zero—but likewise with an increase in those neighbouring parishes which could not afford to run a policeman of their own. The need for uniform protection was thus enforced, and

the way prepared for the county constabularies, which soon afterwards became established.

The poor had little occasion to run risks on the road, in their homes or in their property, and their interest in the highwayman's exploits was confined to the tales that were told when the coaches rolled into the old courtyard of the nearest inn. Yet the sorrows of country life during the first quarter of the century weighed upon the minds as well as the bodies of the poor, and to them there often came a terror by night of worse import than the apparition of the highwayman on the lonely moor, and this was the phantom cart of the 'resurrection men.' The vision of the phantom cart was not merely a tradition; it was a terrible reality. The deeds of the men who a century ago, and especially during the first quarter of the present century, were known as 'resurrection men,' and the means by which dead bodies found their ways from places of burial to London hospitals, are not unknown to those who are familiar with the history of the social life of from seventy to a hundred years ago; but no experience in the crowded city could compare with the terrible nightmare which the 'body-snatcher' was in the country, within fifty miles around London.

Here and there old folks still living can bear witness that the bitterest experience related to them by their fathers of the domestic life in the terribly hard and trying years with which the century began, were those which actually forced many bereaved persons to send some representative of the family armed with blunderbuss to watch in turns in the porch of the village church, to prevent the desecration of the new-made grave. Certainly the 'phantom cart,' moving with its muffled wheels in the dead of night to and from the country churchyard, was not a myth. In old men's memories in the country there still linger tales of belated market-folk getting a ride home, only to find to their horror that the driver had

a mysterious bundle in his cart ; or the still more conclusive story of a London doctor, having friends in the country, walking into the dissecting-room of a London hospital and there recognizing the form of a lady acquaintance in the 'subject' about to be operated upon !

Not only would friends spend the silent hours of night armed with a blunderbuss in some country churchyard, but in town cemeteries spring guns were sometimes set, and then the body-snatcher would resort to artifices such as disguising himself as a lady in black, who would go among the tombs by daylight when an attempt was to be made at night, and in the innocent character of a widow mourning her lost ones, would take the opportunity of disarranging the wires so as to render the spring gun harmless. Sometimes the body-snatchers, on finding that friends were watching the graves upon which they had designs, would beat a retreat, but at others would even show fight and obtain reinforcements.

The difficulties of friends who would have protected their dead from this outrage were increased by the action in some cases of the gravediggers themselves, who were often in league with the body-snatcher, and sometimes became the principal offenders. One of the most gruesome books ever written was assuredly the "Diary of a Resurrectionist," which, edited by Mr. J. B. Bailey, Librarian to the Royal College of Surgeons of England, contains the actual record, as made from day to day, by a resurrectionist named Joseph Naples, son of a bookbinder, then a sailor, next a gravedigger at the Spa Fields Burial Ground, whence he was enticed to join an adventurous crew of resurrection men. The actual diary, which forms rather 'creepy' reading, tells how, night after night, Naples and his companions visited the graveyards in and around London for their 'business,' with intervals when one or other of the gang was "too drunk to go out."

One entry in the above diary reads—"Friday, 10th

December, 1811. Intoxicated all day, at night went out and got five, Bunhill Row, Jack almost buried." Other entries read—"Went down to St. Thomas's, got paid £8 8s. for two adults." "Got four, was stopped by patrols. Butler, horse and cart were taken, Butler bailed. Got seven large and three small . . . Took two over to St. Guy's. On hand two large and three small, home in a coach . . . The moon at full, could not go . . . Came home to Ben, settled £14 6s. 2½d. each man—got up at two, me and Jack and Bill went to Bunhill Row and got three—received £4 4s. for adult—went to look out, came home, went to the play, came home to the Rockingham Arms, got drunk." Mr. Cooper [afterwards Sir Astley Cooper] is frequently mentioned, but besides supplying the hospitals, Naples and his crew did a good deal of 'export' and shipping business, by sending off bodies to Scotland, as appears by such entries as these: "Packed four and sent them to Edinburgh—remained at Barthm. packing up for Edinburgh—sent twelve to the wharf for the above place."

Incidents amusing and otherwise sometimes resulted from the above practice. "Almost an Octogenarian," writing from Bedford to a local paper in 1896, tells this funny story told him by his father, an artist living in London:—"One evening about ten o'clock two men were observed walking along Pall Mall with something in the shape of a human being wrapped up in a piece of green baize. The watchman, supposing them to be 'resurrection men' by one of the arms protruding through the cloth, took them into custody and conveyed them to St. James Watch-house. On opening the shroud, it was found to be a lay figure used by artists, which the proprietors of the panorama had lent to my father. The men were discharged, and the figure restored to the owner the following morning."

Of all the remarkable incidents recorded in the annals of the body-snatchers, that of John Macintire, of Edinburgh,

bears the palm, and for once the body-snatcher was a benefactor without intending it. In April, 1824, Macintire had the singular misfortune to be buried alive. The body-snatchers were on his track, took him up and sold him to the doctors to be dissected, and a curious old broadside is extant (says Mr. Bailey) telling the tale of his wonderful experience and sensations on finding himself buried alive and then taken up again in this strange way!

The great arm of the law, which came down with a swoop upon all offenders against property, was far too clumsy an affair to deal with human sentiment, and a practice which is so hard to realize in these happier times was too often connived at where an example might very easily have been made. One of the oddest documents which has ever come under the notice of the writer has reference to this point, and may be described as "The Dead Men's Petition to Parliament."

"TO THE HONOURABLE THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

"The petition of all dead bodies now interred in the different churchyards of London and its environs most humbly sheweth :—

"That your Petitioners and your Petitioners' ancestors, since the establishment of Christianity, have ever been considered as a sacred deposit, not to be touched by the hands of human cutting or human carcase butchers.

"That many of your Petitioners' brethren in death have, for no earthly crime whatsoever, been torn from their peaceful sepulchres, in the dead of the night, by a set of robbers vulgarly called 'Resurrection Men,' in order to be openly exposed, cut up, and made into skeletons by the said human cutting and human carcase butchers, contrary to all the fine feelings of the mind, and to every principle of that respect which is due to the last retreat of human nature.

"That many of your Honours have wives and children, whom you tenderly love, and by the uncertainty of life may, even while this is writing, be snatched by death and ultimately take residence among us, and that many of your Honours may, by the course of nature or otherwise, either follow or precede your wives and children, and after decent interment may be hauled out of your graves, and served in the manner before mentioned, perhaps on the night of the day on which they shall be interred.

"Your Petitioners therefore most humbly pray that the Bill for the better security of their bones may be read a second time, and passed into law before the demise of the present Session of Parliament.

"And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever remain silent.

"DEAD BODIES."

As to the prejudice against dissection which grew out of this state of things, Jeremy Bentham did his best to remove it by directing that his body was to be given for dissection after his death, which happened in 1832. Bentham's wish was carried out, and an oration was delivered over his body upon the enlightened example he had set. Bentham's skeleton, clothed in his usual attire, is now preserved in the University College, London. The memory of what had occurred in many of our churchyards was so vivid that even when schools of anatomy were able to obtain a 'subject' within the four corners of the Act of Parliament passed for the purpose, the fact of its being lawful was not much consolation to those who had seen the law powerless to protect their friends from the sacrilege of the body-snatcher.

In December, 1833, a riotous scene was witnessed at the University School of Anatomy at Cambridge, over a little quiet arrangement between the Parish Officers of Trinity Parish and Dr. Clarke, Professor of Anatomy. A pauper named Porter, belonging to a parish in Lincolnshire, had died whilst receiving temporary relief at Cambridge, and so they "rattled his bones over the stones" in the direction of the School of Anatomy. The affair got abroad. The Parish Officers were accused of selling the body for dissection, and a public meeting was called to consider the subject. The Vestry Clerk, named Knowles, had to bear the brunt of the public indignation, and while making a defence, shifting the blame on the Overseers, he was hustled about the room by a meeting which had now got out of hand. A resolution that the body was illegally removed

was passed, and a demand that Professor Clarke should give up the body was followed by cries of "We'll have the body now." Outside the room the tumult increased. "Let's get the body." "We'll go to the Anatomy School," yelled the mob, and away they rushed, several hundreds of them, to the Anatomy School. The windows were broken, stones were hurled through, and fell crashing into the specimen cases of other 'subjects' than the one required. Then they attacked the doors, broke in and ransacked the place in search of the body, but could not find it.

Meantime the Mayor had arrived with a posse of special constables, and University men armed with torches. They were greeted with showers of stones, and at first had to retreat, but returned reinforced, and after a pitched battle of sticks and stones the mob was gradually broken up. Some were secured and shut in the anatomy room among the dead men for the night. Next morning a batch of them were brought out, and with some 300 special constables sworn in to overawe them and their friends, as the prisoners were dealt with by the magistrates.

The body was given up by Professor Clarke, and conveyed back to Barnwell amid shouts from the people, who also assembled in front of the gaol and threatened to break it open and rescue the prisoners, but allowed their anger to end in words. The Vice-Chancellor of the University commended the special constables for their services, and announced that if there should be any further need for them the bell at Great St. Mary's should be rung as a signal.

Professor Clarke was able to show that the body was obtained in accordance with the Anatomy Act. There was thus nothing illegal or any violent straining of the Act, and that the affair should have caused so much uproar is an indication of the bitter memories which lingered around a gruesome subject, a subject which was not likely to receive a calm and dispassionate consideration as a theme for discussion at a public indignation meeting.

But the romantic element in the sense of contrast was not all on the side of the people of the country, for there are few things which show more strikingly how great are the social changes in a hundred years than a glimpse of the way in which the fashionable folk went to concerts and balls, and made conventional calls in the West End of London, and in country towns too, up till nearly the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The accompanying picture tells the story without the need of



SEDAN-CHAIR.

any description, but it may be of interest to add that even the sedate style of travel indicated by the sedan-chair sometimes brought the passenger to grief, partly from the infirmities of human nature in the chairmen and partly through those of the sedan-chair itself. If the chairmen from any cause became unsteady in gait, the occupant of the chair became unsteady likewise, and sometimes experienced little mishaps which must have made them wish that Charles I had brought home a Spanish bride instead of altering his mind and bringing home this particular conveyance.

A lady of fashion was on her way to a ball in Belgravia on a wet night, and the chairman, anxious to get out of the rain, went at the double. The chair was a frail one, and the pace shook the chair uncomfortably as well as its rather "substantial contents," and so the lady stood up to remonstrate, when the bottom of the chair fell out, and the fair one found her feet on the ground! The chairman still went on at the trot, not hearing her cries of distress, and so with a pair of silk hose and boots visible below the old rickety structure, their fare was dragged along two streets before the unfortunate lady was 'rescued' by our old friend 'Charlie' the watchman, the policeman's official ancestor.

Wakefield claims the distinction of keeping up the sedan-chair longer than perhaps any other place in England, and furnishes this little accident, which is quoted by Mr. William Andrews in his "Bygone England." It was in December, 1805, when "a young lady was being carried in a Sedan chair from a concert down Westgate at dark, the oil lamp on the prison wall being out, and the next lamp being nearly 100 yards off, the chairman, perhaps being rather fresh, missed the Westgate Bridge and ran the Sedan chair at a trotting pace into the ford. The lady, much alarmed, got on one side of the chair, and the two men lost their balance, and the whole were thrown into the water up to their knees. Some help being at hand, the lady was extricated and brought out of the beck, having received no harm but a cold wetting and a little fright."

The sedan-chair was used in Wakefield until 1830, and it is stated that "an old sedan which would hold four persons was kept in use at the Workhouse down to 1866. It was employed to carry sick persons, and paupers always carried it. Sometimes it was used to carry the infirm to Church."

Intimately associated with the use of the sedan-chair was the 'link-boy,' shown in the accompanying illustration,

who "with his torch of pitch and tow preceded the coach or Sedan chair at night."

While I am writing the end of this chapter there is, in *Notes and Queries*, a quotation from Tuckwell's "Reminiscences of Oxford," which shows that the mother of Pusey was like the Wakefield paupers in her attachment to the sedan, for it is said that she went "to church in her Sedan from Grosvenor Square, up to 1858."



LINK-BOY.



CHAPTER VI.

THE ROMANCE OF REFORM.

WE, at this end of the nineteenth century, who send our Member to Parliament, and can threaten to withdraw our votes if he does not come back with an Act of Parliament for our especial benefit, can never quite realize what it meant for our grandfathers to witness, after weary years of stagnation, that famous high tide in the romance of public life which suddenly flung open the floodgates of freedom of action by means of the great Reform Bill of 1832. That great expanding tide rushed into the back-waters of social and political life, and lifted many an old craft from its moorings never to return to them again. France had burnt her ships when venturing upon the path of revolution; England, the more practical nation, had been content to hold on to the old moorings until a better craft could be built, and thus preserved the bridge of history linking the past with coming time. The result was that in the rosy flush of dawn our grandfathers entered the land of promise, from which there was to be no turning back, as in France, and retracing violent steps with bleeding feet. How patiently they had waited and endured many things which now seem incredibly bad, rather than try to steer a ship without a rudder, is one of the most significant things in modern history, and it helps us to understand the great wave of enthusiasm which overspread the country, even to the

extent of obliterating some of the party landmarks, when at last the great Reform Bill brought the long looked for relief. The opening of the gates of reform was the first act in the deliverance of the English people from the hide-bound officialism, which was oppressive, not from want of heart but from want of thought, and in some measure want of freedom to act, and the land of promise, of which the ardent toilers in the night had dreamed, became possible simply by the removal of the barriers which had so long blocked the way.

In the early aspirations for reform the English people, weighed down by the burden of supporting the great Napoleonic wars, could do little more than engage in high debates upon the abstract principles of liberty and justice. When the century began there was in Parliament and public life some of the most brilliant orators and leaders the nation has ever seen, and yet the way to Parliament, and the miseries of the people who were supposed to send members to that assembly, were in striking contrast with the Parliamentary life, which was rivalling in eloquence the days of ancient Greece and Rome. But when the great wars with France had vanquished Napoleon at Waterloo, and the energies of men were set free, they began to turn their attention to the possibility of bringing some of the abstract principles of debate to bear upon the public life, and it is to the credit of the English, as a practical people, that the thoughts of the reformer were first turned to the great subject of Parliamentary reform as that which could alone make other reforms possible.

Getting into Parliament before the Reform Bill, was a very simple process: you simply got one or two families of influence and position to bring you forward, and if some other people brought their man forward, the Sheriff took a show of hands between them, and declared which was carried. Here is the brief record of a Parliamentary

election at the Shire Hall, Cambridge, a hundred years ago: "At a very respectable and numerous meeting of the freeholders of the County of Cambridge on Monday last in pursuance of advertisement, for the High Sheriff to consider the proper person to represent them in Parliament, Sir Hynde Cotton proposed Charles Yorke, Esq., brother of the Earl of Hardwicke, and was seconded in a very eloquent speech by William Vachell, Esq.; General Adeane was next nominated by Jeremy Pemberton, Esq., who was seconded by the Rev. Mr. Jenyns, and both nominations were carried." In the same issue of the paper containing this notice appeared an address from the two gentlemen returning thanks for their election!

If the High Sheriff's account of the show of hands was challenged, then the candidate had to consider not merely whether his political opinions would commend him to the freeholders, but whether his breeches pocket would hold out. "Now, Gronow, old boy, we like what we have heard about you, your principles and all that sort of thing. We will therefore vote for you if (slapping their breeches pockets)—you know what we mean, old fellow, if not you won't do for Stafford." This was the experience of Captain Gronow, who, some time after commencing his canvass, found the market price of votes sufficient to carry him would be altogether beyond his means. In the General Election of 1802 Sir H. Peyton, who had come forward to contest Cambridgeshire, found it was harder to meet the bills than to secure the votes. His explanation for withdrawing is significant: "When I had the honour of addressing you last I was aware that a contest warmly carried on must be attended with a large expense, and I was prepared to meet it, but on calling in the bills incurred at the last Election I found their amount was infinitely beyond what the best informed persons had led me to suppose, that I cannot persevere in support of the independence of the county without endangering my own.

The result of the canvass has been most favourable. I do not entertain a doubt of being first in the poll, but," etc., etc.

Under such circumstances the canvass was an important criterion. In the neighbouring county of Hertford, about the same time, the candidate retired with this frank confession: "After a success upon my first day's canvassing equal to my most sanguine expectations, I had determined to stand the poll, but finding myself yesterday less fortunate I have resolved to decline." If, however, the candidate could afford to pay the price, there were sundry rough compliments that he must be prepared to face before he emerged from the hustings a legislator. Political opinions, as we understand them to-day, played an incredibly small part. It was possible, as I have written elsewhere, to read through whole columns of the old style of election addresses "without finding expression of opinion upon political questions, or any reflection of what was taking place in the public life of the time." It was mainly a question of confidence in the man, a certificate of character. "Happy candidates! whose political capital was all sugar and plums, and who, haunted by no dread of the old scare-crow of a printed address, with a long string of opinions bound to come home to roost, looking out in judgment upon you in faded but still terribly legible printer's ink from every dead wall—you, at least, had only to get past that rough batch of compliments, the tempest of rotten eggs, cabbages, onions, and occasionally dead cats at the hustings, and you were a legislator pledged simply to vote straight."

As for the pocket boroughs which flourished before the Reform Bill, these are very well summed up in that of Castle Rising in Norfolk, concerning which the Hon. George Broderick, in his "Memories and Impressions," has this recollection: "Though it contained but 300 or 400 inhabitants it continued to be a borough—and, of course, a pocket

borough—until it was disfranchised by the first Reform Act. My father (the Rector) always believed that in the last Election before that event he was the only legal voter, and that although several other votes were actually received they would have been struck off on a scrutiny."

At the trysting-place at the hustings, erected in a meadow or open square, like a great booth at a fair, what a lively time was in store! The candidate, gaily mounted, with his proposer and seconder riding at his side, promenaded the town, with band playing, flags and banners flying. The great noisy crowd shouted itself hoarse so long as the beer held out, 'supporting' the rival candidate in more or less unsteady fashion. "For whom do you vote?" asked the returning officer of each succeeding freeholder as he came up to the hustings to vote, and when the name was called out there were hurrahs for the candidate receiving the vote, and perhaps a rough time for those on the other side who had lost his vote.

Curious incidents, too, sometimes occurred in these 7 or 14 days during which the poll was often kept open. In order to be sure of their men, one party would lock them up in a room with plenty to drink to keep the enemy from them. In any case there was always plenty of drink, a good dinner, and an open house at every inn of the candidate's own colour. Here is what happened to a voter at the Hertfordshire election of 1805, as recorded in Farmer Carrington's diary: "February 11th, Old Jackson, of Buckland, dropt down dead at the Maidenhead, Hertford, a eating his dinner at the Election. He came to poll for Mr. Baker, and Mr. Baker buried him very handsome."

One advantage of the old system of open voting, which kept the election going for several days, was that little informalities could be adjusted on the spot by the Sheriff's assessor, who sat in a room adjoining the hustings. At the General Election of 1802 the following incident deserves

a place among the curiosities of electioneering. In the contested election for Cambridgeshire it was recorded that "At the late Election for this county a very singular circumstance happened. A voter died immediately after his return home, and his son came the third day [to the poll] and voted for the same freehold, which was allowed by both parties." As to the system of keeping open houses, perhaps this aspect of the old electioneering may be summed up by the following copy of an old election bill delivered to an Irish Member by a publican after the General Election in 1807 :—

	£	s.	d.
To eating 16 freeholders above stairs for Sir John at 3s. 3d. a head	2	12	6
To eating 11 more below stairs and two Clergymen after supper	1	15	0
To six beds in one room and four in another at two guineas every bed, three or four in a bed, every night	22	15	0
To 23 horses in a yard all night at 13d. every one of them, and for a man watching them all night	1	5	3
To breakfast and tea next day and for every one of them, and as many as they brought with them, as near as I can guess	4	12	0
To beer, porter, and punch for the first day and night, I am not sure, but I think for the first three days and a half of the Election, as little as I can guess and be very exact is in all or thereabouts	9	13	6
To shaving, dressing, and cropping the heads of 42 freeholders for Sir John at 13d. every one of them	2	5	6
<i>In place of Jeremy Carr Bryan Geraghty ...</i>	£116	1	7

As the Reform Bill was being piloted through the House, the interest of all classes of people began to be roused to watch its progress.

A good story, and in this case a specimen of Tory wit, was supplied by a country town where reforming zeal ran high, and the Whig and Tory inns had their own patrons, but unless you knew your coach as well you might be set down at the inn of the wrong colour. An old Tory having by accident got set down at the Whig house of refreshment, discovering that the waiter's politics were of the same colour as the inn, "angrily exclaimed in the historic words of Lord Brougham," as he laid down the reckoning without the customary waiter's fee: "There, sir, there is the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill."

The amount and character of the political literature inspired by the Bill are a striking testimony to the old methods of party warfare, and to the momentum of a great fact like the Reform Bill. It shows us, too, glimpses of the amenities of electioneering at the time. The 'election squib' was in its palmy days, and the concocters generally took care that the squib 'went off.' Questions of policy and patronage were freely handled without much regard to persons, under cover of anonymity. Of the Rector of Doddington it was put forth, for instance, that "The freeholders of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely, and those of Doddington in particular, cannot but be delighted to learn that the worthy Rector of that parish is promised the Bishopric of Ely in case the Reform Bill passes! This will account for the great activity of this reverend gentleman and large tithe-owner in the cause of reform."

On the other hand, the Duke of Rutland was rallied thus for his patronizing proclivities, the reference in the last line being to Mr. Adeane:—

"When Cambridge dared shake off the yoke,
And Rutland's galling fetters broke,
'Tis said the Duke, with ruffled crest,
Proudly the rebel host addressed :

* * * *

“ ‘Who to the House a Speaker gives ?

Who asks for mitres freely ?

Sutton, my coz, at Lambeth lives,

My tutor, Sparke, at Ely.’

“ ‘T was here a freeman answered him,

Fairly enough I ween :

‘ Shall, then, your Grace two Bishops make,

And shan’t we make a Dean ! ’ ”

A great fact like the Reform Bill could not fail to ‘ knock the wind out of somebody.’ On the more serious side of the parting of the ways between family and popular representation in Parliament, a farmer got some glimpse of prophetic vision, though he failed to recognize the inevitable fact of the majority’s right to rule, and that the country could not stand still even for so important a class as the farmer. This was his prophetic lament over the issues of the Reform Bill, as seen from the wheat barn-door—a shrewd, though limited outlook :—

“ Farmers ! Are you thus mad ! Are you to be cheated by a mock reform ! By the Bill the towns will return double the number to the numbers that the counties will. Mark the consequence ! The large towns will petition for cheap bread and no corn-laws. They will have by the Bill a great majority over you in Parliament. Their petitions will be granted. Foreign corn will drive yours out of the market, and yourselves and your children into gaol, and there you will have leisure to thank the blessed Reform Bill and your own madness for having demanded it ! Look before you leap ! ”

With such views prevalent, and that the price of corn was one of the pillars of the Constitution, what wonder that the struggle was a hard and protracted one, but in the end justice and common-sense prevailed, even at the risk of some injustice to particular classes, and the necessity for teaching them that their private interests were lesser than the common good. In the end the Boroughmongers went

under and obtained burial with abundance of epitaphs, the broadsides of the time depicting the funeral procession and 'in memoriams' of quite a number of old figureheads, that sunk into the great chasm opened by the romantic upheaval which gave us the Reform Bill.

It is impossible to describe the great wave of enthusiasm which the 'Bill' aroused all over the country, and how men, almost irrespective of party ties, rejoiced to be free from an effete system, and drunk of the new wine which was bursting the old bottles until the banqueting-house was full. All over the country banquets were held to celebrate "so glorious a triumph," and the gatherings were recorded in the local newspapers of the time in language which leaves no doubt of the impression upon the public mind. Bells rang, bands of music, amateur and otherwise, headed enthusiastic processions, open squares were filled with long lines of tables, at which carvers cut up joints innumerable, tapsters kept the ale and wine flowing, orators 'rose to the occasion,' and poured their eloquence over a toast-list which was one long pæan of political rapture. "The people's triumph," "The King and the people united must prevail," "England's wealth, the working classes," "Our aim is peace, our end is victory," and so on through the gamut of popular acclaim, summed up "this proud moment of conscious victory when the march of ages is overstepped by the exertions of a day."

If reform were necessary with regard to the representation of rotten boroughs, there was an equally great necessity for reform in the local affairs of these boroughs. They had become incredibly corrupt. The exercise of such municipal powers as they had were subject to no popular control, and the "proceedings being secret were unchecked by the influence of public opinion." Revenues that ought to be applied to public advantage were diverted, and sometimes "wastefully bestowed for the benefit of individuals," and squandered "for purposes injurious to the character

and morals of the people." Freemen of the borough, who had been restricted in number and enjoyed privileges sometimes of considerable value, were, in the few years before the Reform Bill, conferred for political and other considerations in the most unblushing manner. At Malden, whose average had been only 17 a year, 1,870 freemen were created during the general election year of 1826, and 1,000 of these were made *during the election* ! Bristol conferred the privilege upon 1,720 persons during the general election year of 1812, against an average of 50 a year ; and when, in 1816, an election took place at Liverpool and Gloucester, the former 487 instead of an average of 30 freemen, and the latter 415 instead of 30. The figures for 128 cities and towns, given in the Parliamentary return for 1832, are as eloquent as Captain Gronow's confession about the electors of Stafford. In the ordinary way these 128 cities and towns made between 1,000 and 2,000 freemen a year, but these are the figures for typical years :—In 1802 (no election), 1,808 freemen ; in 1818, with a general election, 8,889 ; and next year (no election), 1,430. In the general election year of 1826 Malden was not alone, for the freemen that year for the 128 cities and towns rose from the 1,500 average to 10,797 ! The inference is obvious, that the party holding the reins made the most of its opportunity. If this state of things prevailed in towns and made the Municipal Corporations' Act necessary, it is not surprising that small rural parishes were not blessed with a very healthy public life or independence.

In the West the pocket boroughs flourished exceedingly. Cornwall, largely by means of them, sent forty members to Parliament, within one of the number for all Scotland ! Camelford and its single street returned two members, and in the election of 1812 each voter received £100 for his vote ! In 1818 the Mayor, who manipulated the election, announced his intention of "giving the majority

to Lord Darlington's nominee, and of turning out of their freehold all who opposed." But an opposing club, "The Bundle of Sticks," engaged a manager of the election from London, put into his hands £6,000, and £400 each went to the small band of voters. St. Mawes, "consisting of a row of houses looking upon the creek," returned its two members to Parliament. St. Michael's or Mitchells, with 19 houses, 180 inhabitants, and *only three voters*, returned its two members, or in other words the Lord of the Manor did, and the great Duke of Wellington had been one of its members.

"In most of the rural districts of England there were parishes, not here and there, but parishes by shoals, presenting a state of things more rotten and more demoralizing than any of the annals of the Borough-mongers could furnish"; and it was into this field that the hopes of many earnest men were turning for the enduring fruits of reform.

In the peasants' rising in the Isle of Ely, it was recognized at last that "the disorderly conduct of the lower classes was due to the habits produced by the existing system of the Poor-law." The fact was that parochial reform was struggling out of the saddest little slough of despond, in which rural England was so helplessly involved that nothing but a parochial revolution in every parish in the land could save the moral character of the labourer; for "in the sacred name of charity, laziness and immorality, unblushing and insolent, were found to be feeding the system of pauperism and eating out the vitals of country life." Out of former years of scarcity there had grown up a system of making up a low wage out of the poor rate, according to the number of the man's family. If a farmer or employer were inclined to an independent course he was only paying part of the wages (through the rates) which other farmers refused to pay.

The reports of the Poor Law Commissioners are full of

remarkable instances of demoralization resulting from the system. Here is a resolution actually passed at the Vestry meeting of a church in rural England in 1833 :—" Resolved that the rate of wages for able-bodied men be reduced to 4s. per week, and that 1s. per week be given to each wife, and 1s. for each child every week. If there are not any children, allow the wife 1s. 6d. per week." In two parishes referred to in the Commissioners' report, a family consisting of a man, his wife, and grown-up sons, were receiving in one case 19s. per week from the parish in the form of 'make-up' pay, as it was called in the old parish books, and in another case 24s. per week. The result of this system was that single men found it difficult to obtain employment, and were paid low wages, with the consequent inducement to contract early and improvident marriages in order to get on the parish list, and a steady, thrifty man had no chance of getting employment until he had spent his money, the farmers preferring to employ those to whom they had to contribute through the rates. The economic result was a ring of pauperism, outside which a respectable man had no chance. The overseers' position was anything but an enviable one. The pauper was master of the situation, was often insolent in his demands upon the overseer, and even summoned him before a magistrate if he refused to make up his wage or give relief. The magistrates supported them, and they "went home with feathers in their hats, collected a crowd before the Overseer's house, and shouted in triumph."

As to the effect of this wholesale pauperism upon public morals of the period, a whole chapter is summed up in a comment of one of the Commissioners on the system which prevailed in regard to bastardy and pauperism: "The law secured to the woman either a husband or a weekly allowance to support her child." It is just at this point of the function of the parish in securing a husband to the young woman who was otherwise likely to be a trouble to the

parish, that the one saving element of humour and even romance came into the sordid picture of life among the poor which the pre-reform period presents to us. It was at this point that Mr. Bumble came upon the scene, and the result of his diplomacy in matchmaking proved over and over again the justification of his own success in the wooing of Mrs. Corney. Where in a parish no beadle was kept, the parish constable took up the rôle of Mr. Bumble, and it is to the accounts he kept of his transactions that you may look for some of the most quaint episodes of parochial life—the record of a pauper's wedding. How Mr. Bumble came to be an important party in these interesting functions often arose out of the old law of settlement. If, for instance, a parish had reason to suppose that a fair one was likely to be a trouble to the parish, it was Mr. Bumble's office to look up the responsible swain, and by "persuasion, threats, and bribes" bring the parties together, and by hook or by crook get them through the marriage ceremony. In this little diplomatic business, Dogberry was generally allowed a free hand in smoothing the way by such little considerations as "eatin' an' drinkin'," for the sufficient reason that the ceremony often meant the removal of an undesirable pauper from one parish to another. When the young man belonged to another parish, there was a pretty little bit of parochial diplomacy between the two parish constables, to see which parish could outwit the other and get rid of the prospective pauper.

It has been the writer's privilege to examine many old parish documents, but none can ever equal in point of interest those produced by the parish constable when he was called upon to perform a variety of functions, among them these little matrimonial affairs, the result of which appeared in the parochial accounts for the year. In these accounts Dogberry justified the large amount spent in "eatin' an' drinkin'" by a successful issue of his matchmaking diplomacy. Sometimes the transaction was recorded in

the bald announcement: "Gave G—— a wife, cost £3 19s. 6d."; or by the more suggestive form: "By expenses attending marrying Mary D—— and sending her away, £1 17s. 6d."; "For the expenses for having S—— S—— and his wife to London, £2 12s. 6d."

But the parochial revolution which was destined to follow the Reform Bill touched the bed-rock of Arcady in the old parochial workhouse. The parish let out the farming of the paupers to a contractor, and advertised for a candidate: "Workhouse to let." In some villages a labouring man would come forward and undertake the responsible task at the low figure of 1s. 4d. per head, with the right of making use of their labour at the spinning-wheel and other forms of work. In a roomy old house with thatched roof, the halt, the maimed, and the blind were huddled together. Here is Farmer Carrington's picture of the aged and infirm in Tewin Workhouse, on the occasion of a visit from that worthy:—"To Tewin Workhouse to see blind Williamson, the Scotchman, and to treet the poor their in beer. Gave them 22 quarts of beer, and lofe and cheese, and smoked a pipe with them. Old Webster aged 86, old Burton 83, old Leves 83, old Lowin 80, old Wood 68, old Tuck, deaf and blind, 70. The Poorhouse is on the S.W. side of the Upper Green, formerly a small farm, with two barnes near the pond."

But it was not only the old and infirm who were huddled there together, but the worthless, the immoral, illegitimate children, and viragoes of violent temper who would swear and "sing improper songs," notwithstanding the well-meant efforts of the parochial visitors. Like the outdoor paupers, they often got the upper hand, and any new rules suggested by the parish for the better discipline in the poorhouse, stood but small chance of being carried out unless they had first been "submitted for the approval of the inmates"!

In due course the Poor Law Commission presented

its report, disclosing a rotten parasitical condition of the parochial life "of England, from which it was clear that "salvation from within the parish" was practically impossible. The new Poor Law, passed in 1834, put an end to the parish as the unit of Poor Law administration, and, by the grouping of parishes into unions, brought in its train nothing short of a parochial revolution. In place of the old village poorhouse, in which every pauper had a kind of freehold or vested interest, there arose over the hills, in some cases beyond the horizon of the little world in which the pauper had lived, the walls of the great Union Workhouse, which, being looked upon as a prison, soon gained the name of the Bastille. As the great building rose and cast its black shadow over the rural life of England, dread of it, and the terror of being torn away from the old moorings in the parish, increased until the change provoked unsparing denunciations from men who were inclined to sympathize with the better side of the old order of things. Here and there popular discontent took the form of open hostility, and, I think, next to the rising of the peasants after Waterloo in the Fen country, the most romantic instance in the effort of the dull masses of the people to make their case heard, was the projected storming of the 'Bastille,' which for a time threw some of the country districts into such a ferment that the Home Secretary was obliged to send down soldiers to protect the new 'Bastille.'

So the great Union Workhouses arose all over the land, and the pauper clubs of the parish were abolished, the building was sold and pulled down, and the parish knew it no more. Men of statistics found remarkable justification for the change in the great reduction of expenditure upon the poor in the next few years, but it was a long time before the poor could be induced to look upon the new order of things with friendly eyes.



CHAPTER VII.

THE ROMANCE OF THE RAILWAY.

THE beginnings of the great enterprise which now links places and people remote from one another, and widens the horizon of humanity, rocked the very cradle of romance when our grandfathers were young. You nowhere get the effect of contrast in a more remarkable degree than by tracing in old men's memories the first impressions made therein by the birth of the great forces which have revolutionized our public life since the nineteenth century began. The steam-engine and the railway have been, far and away, the greatest quickening and revolutionizing powers of the last hundred years, and it is therefore interesting to know what our grandfathers thought and feared when they heard, in the heated controversies of the time, the rumbling of the coming express train which was to carry their descendants to distant parts of the earth, of which they themselves had only dreamed. This fragment, drawn from an old man's recollections and communicated to the writer a few years ago, shows how our grandfathers regarded the coming of the iron horse:—

“My father and Master Primmitt were talking as we walked home from the meeting house. I had hold of my father's hand and listened to their talk. Neighbour Holland, at the Lower Farm, had hurt his leg in his new thrashing-machine, the first ever seen in our part of the country, and

Master Primmitt thought it was a 'judgment' for meddling with strange things 'instead o' thrashing his wheat with a frail,' but my father would not allow that it was. Then they talked together of things past and to come, and I listened and wondered. I heard my father say, 'You m'd 'pend 'pon 't, Ben, steam'll come into use afore long.' After we got home and were sitting round the fire in the broad chimney corner in the evening, I went over to my father's side of the fireplace, and standing between his knees I asked: 'Father, what was that you were telling Master Primmitt this morning about steam coming?' Then my father told me they were trying to bring in a Bill to make a railway, but all the great folk and those who had any land were 'agin it.' 'You'll live to see it come, though, but I dessay I shan't.'"

The author of this little forecast was not a dreamer, or an enthusiast, but only a country yeoman, with his little homestall to look after, but he, like other country folk of seventy years ago, had actually seen steam power at work along the roads, although he knew little enough what a railway train would be like if it ever came. Steam power for communication was ahead of the railways, and before the conflict with landowners and popular sentiment had been overcome and railways became possible, it found an outlet in some ingenious inventions and experiments. Steam locomotives were to be seen on certain turnpike roads from 1815 onwards, and, in fact, more or less during the first quarter of the century. They were a kind of early motor-car of a crude and clumsy type. Mr. Goldsworthy Gurney brought his invention "to such a perfection that he was able to ascend hills with it," and to travel from London to Bath and back. As late as 1831 "one of his steam carriages ran for about four months on the road between Gloucester and Cheltenham." The same kind of thing happened on the roads in Scotland, but, like the railway smash of modern times, the old road motor-car

sometimes came to grief, and its heavy boiler exploded. One such accident in Scotland, in 1834, caused considerable loss of life, and must have added its share to the popular prejudice regarding the 'puffing billy' stage of early nineteenth-century inventions.

During the first quarter of the century there were a number of short railroads or tram-roads in the various parts of the country, chiefly for conveying minerals or merchandise. A shrewd commercial traveller named Thomas Gray, when travelling in the North, saw a train of tram coal waggons drawn by steam, and asked, "Why are not tram-roads laid down all over England, so as to supersede our common roads, and steam-engines employed to convey goods and passengers along them to supersede horse-power?" "Propose that to the nation," was the reply he received, "and see what you will get by it!" "Why, sir, you will be worried to death for your pains!" But Gray, who was looked upon as a dreamer, with other pioneers who saw great possibilities in the railway, kept on talking about it and worrying the public mind. Others took up the theme, and the steam locomotion became the shuttlecock for no end of theoretical battledores, and gradually forced its way to the front as a thing that would have to come when the principle was admitted. At first the battle was fought among the mechanical engineers, over the question of travelling or fixed engines—that is, stationary engines pulling vehicles along a given length of railway, just as the steam-plough is worked to-day. They evidently did not anticipate such runs as from London to Edinburgh, or the Canadian Pacific, which crosses a whole continent. For a time compressed air, as against steam as a propelling force, was also a theory which found practical tests on various lines.

On the question of speed the estimates of experts do not seem to have been very alarming as we view such things to-day, and yet it was upon this point that the

public mind was a little upset, and the more cautious of the mechanical engineers of the time counselled moderation, lest the advantages of the new system should be delayed by unduly prejudicing the public mind. This was how the momentous question of speed was discussed in the year 1825, when railways were in the air :—

“All these circumstances [conditions of the line laid down, etc.] demand the serious attention of the engineer who has to conduct a railway where carriages are to proceed at the rate of 10 miles an hour. We speak of this as rapid motion, and the more we consider the subject the more reason we find to consider it so ; and we see no material advantage in a greater speed, unless it were in a railway for messengers only . . . and being successful in this instance it might be adopted for the conveyance of mails, but that any general system of conveying passengers would answer to go at a velocity exceeding 10 miles an hour or thereabouts is extremely improbable ” !

“But with all these assurances [as to safeguards, etc.] we should as soon expect the people of Woolwich to suffer themselves to be fired off by one of Congreve’s ricochet rockets as trust themselves to the mercy of such a machine going at such a rate [18 to 20 miles an hour is mentioned]. We will back old Father Thames against the Woolwich railway for any sum.”

Even those who believed in the railway were not very enthusiastic on the subject of speed, and were fearful of alarming the public. One of these believers in railways was anxious to disclaim any idea of proclaiming to the world “that the ridiculous expectations, or rather professions, of enthusiastic speculators will be realized, and that we shall see engines travelling at the rate of 12, 16, 18, or 20 miles an hour. Nothing could do more harm towards their general adoption than the promulgation of such nonsense !”

These very cautious and fearful estimates of letting loose a railway train, to run through a community, emanated

not from here and there a nervous individual, but from competent men, civil engineers, actually engaged in the scientific investigation of problems of travel. They are to be found in abundance in the Old Railway Histories of Wood, Francis, and others, and emanate from civil engineers such as Tredgold and other recognized authorities of the time. We, who think nothing of the "railway race to the North," or of such records as 60 to 70 miles an hour, have no reason to flatter ourselves upon our greater courage, or that we have exhausted the possibilities of mechanical engineering; we have rather to be thankful for the marvellous improvements in mechanical science which has been fostered by the introduction of railways. The cautious and, as we may think them, absurd estimates of the possibilities of the railway train are a gauge, not of the daring of our fathers, but of the state of mechanical science and engineering experience at the time, the infancy and growth of which have been the most romantic element in the harnessing of the iron horse. Below the professional men were the people, who were afraid even of such modest notions as the venturesome engineers entertained.

More remarkable, perhaps, than the fears of the public, for whose convenience these flying monsters were to be provided, were the extraordinary prejudices against their introduction entertained or professed by all having any interest in keeping things as they were, and even by landed proprietors, who often had more to gain by the railways than any other class. Country gentlemen, who were only too ready to listen to or advance all sorts of objections to the new system, were told that the smoke from the engines would kill their birds as they passed over the locomotive, and the foxes and pheasants would cease in the neighbourhood of the railway; that the race of horses would be extinguished, farmers would find no market for oats and hay, and "even cows would cease to yield their milk in the

neighbourhood of one of these infernal machines." One of the objectors "would sooner give £10,000 than have a steam-engine come puffing near him." Another pathetically summed up his lamentations thus: "If this railroad is to be made we must quit the place where we have lived so long and happily; we must leave, we must go away." One old gentleman actually made his will, leaving his estate to his son on the condition that he (the son) should never travel by train!

Then it was objected that the railway train "would not go so fast as the canal, or so safe as the coach, that the engine would burst, and the wheels would fly off." It was further described as the "greatest nuisance, the most complete disturbance of quiet and comfort, in all parts of the Kingdom that the ingenuity of man could invent." It is recorded that a clergyman in Hampshire petitioned against a railway in his own neighbourhood because "the rustics would keep away from church to see the train pass by"! It is also said of the people of the time: "Our very language begins to be affected by it. Men talk about 'getting up the steam to railway speed,' and reckon on distances by hours and minutes." A great duke, referring to the canals, then a substantial dividend-paying property* in the country, said, "they will last my time, but I see mischief in these . . . tram-roads." Some even doubted the commercial success of the enterprise which was to make such inroads into the settled habits of country life, and one prophetic soul, with the vision of a seer, anticipated Macaulay's famous figure of the New Zealander sitting upon the broken arches of London Bridge and gazing upon the ruins of St. Paul's. Of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway it was declared that "its bridges and culverts would be antiquarian ruins," that "it would not take toll

* As late as 1846 the Grand Junction Canal was paying 6 per cent., the Oxford 26, the Coventry 25, the Old Birmingham 16, and the Trent and Mersey 30.

sufficient to keep it in repair," and that "every hill and valley between the two towns would behold falling arches and ruined viaducts."

With such an amount of prejudice, and vested interests in old institutions doomed to suffer if the bridges, culverts, and viaducts did survive, it is not surprising that the promoters of railways had to encounter no end of obstacles. Surveyors often had to carry their levelling instruments through hostile country at the risk of personal violence, of being ducked in the village horse-pond, and even, it is said, of being fired upon. The conditions under which the new Companies were promoted, and the lines constructed, made the initial cost of obtaining Acts of Parliament enormous. The first Act of the London and Birmingham Railway is said to have cost £72,000, the Great Western £80,000, and the London and Brighton, after a contest of fifty days, £50,000.

The promotion of the Eastern Counties is a good illustration of the tremendous difficulties which promoters had to encounter. The estimated expenditure for land, compensation, engineering, and Parliamentary expenses was £270,000, but the actual figures ran up to £718,765 16s. 10d. Lord Petre's opposition was a remarkable feature, and it is said he got £120,000 to withdraw his opposition, for land worth but a few thousands, but on the other hand his Lordship seems to have been treated in a hostile and "irritating spirit." Canvassers went to and fro up and down the course of the proposed line, visiting proprietors, public meetings were held, and before the Bill was read in Parliament a second time half the capital was subscribed; but it was the Manchester and Liverpool men who put heart into the enterprise, and pulled it through by subscribing heavily for shares—holding half in fact. At the first meeting of the shareholders, here as elsewhere, eloquent orations depicted in glowing colours the future of the "proud triumph of modern science," which

was to open the Eastern ports once more, "give vigour to industry, and make commerce active and the people happy." The oyster-beds of Colchester were to revive; Yarmouth "would remember her youth and fill her harbour with commerce."

The rosy picture was not at first realized; when the calls became due some of the shareholders refused to pay them, and paid no attention when reminded that their shares would be forfeited. They were even appealed to through advertisements that the work must stop if they did not pay up, but these appeals had no effect, and legal proceedings had to be resorted to, with the result that shares were at a discount of 50 per cent. Over that official business of depositing notices of their proposed bills at the Board of Trade by the 30th of November, for considering during the following session of Parliament, the Railway Promoters, hampered until the last moment with difficulties, had an exciting time; especially when, after the first few important lines were secured, extensions in all directions were taken up with extraordinary rapidity. Where there was already a line to London good use was made of it.

"Special trains were run, and the greatest excitement was experienced at the Board of Trade. The Eastern Counties ran eighteen or twenty special trains to get them there in time" (Francis' History of Railways). Engines were everywhere kept standing with steam up, and they ran at a daring pace, it seems, for those days. As for the lines of communication, where railways did not serve the purpose of sending up plans, etc., in time, "horses could not be had for love nor money." Then, too, there were the wiles of the opposition, the promoters of rival lines, and others to watch, for, like the old electioneering agents who put electors out of the way to prevent them voting, they were ready in this matter to seize an opportunity of defeating the promoters. One Company, for instance,

rushed up to the Board of Trade at the last moment, found to its dismay that it had "lost some of its lithographed sheets," and it was alleged that they had found their way at a high price into the hands of a rival company!

When at last the railways got constructed and were opened for traffic, the public mind was by no means easy on the subject of the safety of the new mode of travel, even at the very moderate rates which were at first attempted. The accident to Mr. Huskisson, M.P. for Liverpool, killed by a locomotive at the opening of Stephenson's railway connecting Manchester and Liverpool in 1830, did not reassure the public, nor did the very crude conditions under which passengers were conveyed in the first railways tend very much to reconcile the timid passengers. Here, again, it is impossible to realize what early railway travelling was like without taking into account the state of the public mind in regard to the innovation, and the following personal reminiscences from those who remembered the first railway trains and lived to be able to contrast them with the present may be worth quoting:—

"My first railway ride was in one of the very first trains which ran up to London from —— station, for that was the nearest station to our part of the country. When the Eastern Counties Railway was opened to get to London by train, we in the country districts had to rise early in the morning and drive a distance of 15 miles to the station, at ——, and long rows of gigs and farmers' carts were put up there to await the return of the owners for the drive home in the evening. There was a good number of us at the station, I remember, when the train was ready to start, and as most of us had never seen such things as railway trains before, I daresay we were a little nervous, especially about the engine, and the chances that the boiler might burst, and I remember that a very comical thing happened before we started. When the train drew up at the platform, the engine-driver, without thinking, suddenly let off steam

and blew the engine whistle. The effect upon those nearest to the engine was like throwing off a bombshell, for they rushed back, helter-skelter, away from the engine, and two or three were knocked down. But when at last the Clerk had written out our tickets and we got into the waggons, for you could not call them carriages, it was a curious experience.

"The third-class carriages were very much like our present cattle-trucks, and, as there were no seats, we stood up side by side, a little crowd in the truck, holding our hats and staring at the rushing trees and hedgerows as you sometimes see cattle do in a cattle train to-day. But there was one rather improved type of carriage, which became more general later on. In this case the open truck had iron hooping over the top, and a covering of tarpaulin over that. There was a rush for this 'fancy' carriage, which at least sheltered your eyes from the breeze and your waistcoat from the smoke and blacks from the engine. The result was that this 'carriage' was overcrowded. The great pressure of the weight on the wheels, and the consequent friction, began to produce sparks, and then smoke, and the passengers became terrified. Some set to work trying to tear away the tarpaulin from the roof in order to get sight of and communicate with the guard, but the tarpaulin seemed to be the strongest part of the carriage. At last, in sheer desperation, one young fellow forced an opening through the top, got through the tarpaulin, and in this position he caught sight of the guard perched on behind, and gave the alarm. The train was steadied, and when soon after it pulled up at the next station there was a stampede of passengers from the 'fancy' carriage to the open ones, while some were so upset by the incident that they flatly refused to go any further by the train at all. Others were obliged by the calls of business to continue the journey, but the reduced weight removed all danger, and we reached London without further incident."

It seems incredible now, with our corridor trains, with luncheon cars, lavatories, and many of the conveniences of the hotel on board, that the British public had at first to travel in open trucks, and that in stormy weather the passengers crowded down into the corners for shelter, sitting on the floor and getting such protection as the sides of the truck afforded from the rain. When the top covering was added to the carriages, there was an opening in the upper part like the open cattle-trucks of to-day.

By the time the Grand Junction Railway from Birmingham to Liverpool and Manchester was opened in 1837, men began to take a more hopeful view of the experiment, and ceased to predict the ruined arches and viaducts. At first there was a preponderance of first-class over second-class passengers, the figures for the first nine weeks being 48,888 first-class and 45,341½ second-class. For the long journeys from Birmingham to Liverpool and Manchester, the first-class passengers more than doubled the second, while for the shorter distances the second class were more than the first. The fares were, from Birmingham to Manchester or Liverpool, 97¼ miles, first-class 21s., open carriages 14s. In other words, you paid nearly 2d. a mile for the privilege of travelling in a cattle-truck. As to speed over this typical line, first-class trains travelled the 97¼ miles in 4½ hours, or about 21½ miles in an hour; while the open carriage train took 5¼ hours, or about 18 miles an hour. At first the booking-clerk had to write out a separate ticket for every passenger, with the purchaser's name, but by 1836 this had become tedious, and one Thomas Edmondson, in the service of the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway, found the burden too great, and, obtaining a hand-stamp, printed the tickets, the first step in the evolution of a distinct industry with highly technical appliances for meeting the enormous demand for tickets to-day.

Equally romantic with the origin of the railway system has been the evolution of the locomotive, and the growth

of great mechanical centres for its production. When the London and North-Western Railway came to Crewe it found a lone farmhouse on the summit of a hill with pastures and cornfields all around. That old house is still standing with its whitewashed and studded walls, a curious survival, with the part of modern Crewe called High Town surging around it with grim, earnest-visaged workmen, steam hammers, and screws. There, where the cattle grazed and produced Cheshire butter, buttermilk, and cheese, in the dark, oozy pastures covering clay and sand, now every night and morning some 35,000 toilers sleep to the unceasing serenade of the locomotive's whistle, and wake to the music of the 'buzzer' at the 'Works.' At this Mecca of mechanical engineering 8,000 men are engaged in making requisites of locomotion from the smallest screw to a locomotive, and the whole place owes its origin and its continued existence as one of the greatest railway centres in the world to the trifling circumstance of the Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester Railway passing that way.

Swindon on the Great Western, Doncaster on the Great Northern, Derby on the Midland, can also tell a tale of railway enterprise; while the G.N.R. from London to York, which had a desperate struggle in its early history, now carries through Finsbury Park 850 trains per day, and "at busy times fifty-four per hour." As for that ten miles an hour speed which so exercised the mind of worthy Mr. Tredgold, C.E., in the infancy of railway enterprise, it has now grown to sixty or seventy miles an hour. The possibilities and wonders of railway travel are not yet exhausted, and the farther they go the greater force will remain in the brave utterances of here and there a writer who recognized at the time Stephenson's splendid victory over Chat Moss. "Not calculation of percentages and dividends wrought this work," wrote a Westminster Reviewer. "It was a high, heroic soul, a strong English spirit, the magnificent will, the indomitable energy,

breaking forth to win a world from chaos." "Stephenson," the early directors of the railway declared, "had left a memory that princes might be proud of," and that "the most distinguished man living would be glad to exchange his fame for that which would surround the name of George Stephenson."





CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROMANCE OF A TELEGRAM.

"A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night."

THESE were the two primary letters in the old telegraphic code of the ancient world, and, as we read them in Holy Writ, they stand, for the most part, simply as danger signals for securing the tents of a primitive, nomadic people against danger from without. All through the ages these pillars of fire and smoke have ascended, and have been the means by which men, separated by distance, in the caravan, the chase, or on pilgrimages, have spelt out for one another broad, vivid, and more or less intelligible warnings against coming danger, or tidings of victory or defeat. From the tents of the Israelites in the wilderness to experiments in wireless telegraphy along the cliffs at Dover in the year 1900 may seem a very long stride, and yet it is along this pathway that the evolution of a telegram, as we know it to-day, has proceeded, and you cannot quite realize the romance which has attended, and is still attending, the development of the electric telegraph during the century now drawn to its close, without taking into account, by way of contrast, the primitive conditions of telegraphic signalling which prevailed in the ancient world, indeed, right along to the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Pliny's suggestion that communication by means of fire signals was invented by the crafty Greek who contrived the Wooden Horse at the siege of Troy, was no doubt founded upon the fact that the preconcerted signal for opening that classic dummy, the contents of which were to surprise the Trojans, was "a light displayed from the Royal Ship." But the Trojan Horse was a modern affair compared with the fire telegrams of the ancient world. You may see their "twinkling points of fire" shining from afar, even through the mists and myths in which Homeric gods and men pass and repass across the fields of vision—away back among the first races of men whose security rested upon the first law of nature, the law of self-defence. The twinkling light of these early fire telegrams is reflected through all the classic writers, and their ashes give names to many of our hilltops to-day. Many examples might be given, but a few will suffice. Alexander the Great placing a staff over the royal tent, from which "signals might be given, equally conspicuous to all, fire being used by night and smoke by day"; Medea arranging correspondence with her paramour Jason, by "signals from the Palace to the Watch Tower on the sea-shore, by means of smoke in the day and fire in the night"; Mardonius informing the King at Sardis that he has taken Athens, 'telegraphing' by means of torches at intervals along the islands; the night watchman keeping his post for ten long years on the tower of Agamemnon's palace, waiting for the old-world telegram blazing forth into the night on the distant hills, which was to bring the news of the fall of Troy and of the King's return—

"Here now I watch, if haply I may see
The blazing torch whose flame brings news from Troy,
The signal of its ruin."

It was in this way that the old fire telegrams served the intelligence department of the ancient world, until

not only "from the steep of Lemnos, Athos' sacred height received the mighty splendour," but in a later day England sent fire telegrams flashing through the shires at the approach of the Spanish Armada, and gave us in Macaulay's swinging lines that stirring picture when—

"Far o'er the deep the Spaniard saw, along each Southern Shire,
Cape beyond Cape, in endless range those twinkling points of fire."

Every schoolboy knows how the fiery signal sped: "all night from tower to tower they sprang, all night from hill to hill"—

"Till the proud peak unfurled the flag o'er Derwent's rocky dales,
Till like volcanoes flared to heaven the stormy hills of Wales

Equally well known is the variant of this telegraphic warning in the 'Fiery Cross' over the border, in the fighting days of old—a pole burnt at one end, with blood at the other and a cross at the top, the cross of shame indicating disgrace and the banner of fire and sword through their land in case of refusal to appear at the rendezvous—carried with speed and handed on from bearer to bearer, until the whole country had caught the call to arms. Up to nearly the dawn of the nineteenth century the old pitch-pan telegraph spoke from hill to hill in tongues of fire the few common messages of national concern. These old telegrams of fire and smoke were managed in this way, as described by a writer at the end of the last century:—

"In the daytime the smoke at a particular hill may give notice to an observer on the next hill that a communication is about to be made; he, of course, will answer it by smoke, to show that he is upon the watch. The smoke will then disappear on both hills by a cover being placed over the fire, which [the cover] being taken off and put on again repeatedly, will show a succession of clouds of smoke,

rising at proper intervals in the air. The observer notes the number of times that the smoke rises without a considerable interval, suppose three times, and he then writes down the number 3. After an interval determined by the parties, the smoke rises again, we will suppose four times, and he writes down the number 4, and has now the number 43 [34?] to communicate by signals to the next post. At night this is done by the successive appearance and disappearance of fire. In making the signals by numbers, the last person who receives the signal has nothing to do but refer to his book for the meaning of the signal made to him."

As may be supposed, these old fire and smoke telegrams were sometimes made use of for private business, and the smugglers on the coast found in them a useful means of communication, by a telegraphic code of their own, for signalling to vessels in the offing. But though the hills and the towers of castle and turret have ceased to answer one another in tongues of fire, their names are with us for evermore. In the Tots, Totterns, and the 'Toots,' 'Toothills,' 'Tuts' and 'Tuthills,' and the 'Beacon' Hills, still to be found entering into so many of our old place-names, you have indications of the old fire-hills, which were in reality the telegraph stations of the ancient world, and of the world as it was known to some of our grandfathers.

Just before the birth-hour of this wonderful century there came such a great innovation for actual spelling out of longer messages, that the functions of the old telegrams of fire and smoke were things of the past. This was the introduction from France of the Semaphore telegraph, which, in various forms, communicated intelligence by movable arms or figures. The first official notice of this innovation, "the machine to which the French have given the name of telegraph," was given by Barrière, in a report in which he thus describes the invention:—"The newly invented telegraphic language of signals is an artful

contrivance to transmit thoughts in a peculiar language, by the help of machines placed at different distances of from three to five leagues from one another, so that the expression reaches a very distant place in the space of a few minutes." The first actual description of the invention to reach England was found in the pocket of a French prisoner.

The new system set the country people all agog talking about and laughing at the idea of setting up poles with crossbars, which, being swung about, were made to talk. The Rev. J. Gamble, Chaplain to His Royal Highness the Duke of York, Commander of the Forces, happened to be something of a faddist, and his peculiar hobby was telegraph signalling. He whispered in the ear of his royal master that he could improve upon the French telegraph, and appears to have got so far as setting up an experimental apparatus at Portsmouth by permission of the Admiralty. He also went as far as to collect a great deal of evidence and information, which he got printed under the title of "Telegraphic Observations," and presented copies to the Admiralty. But like some other men of genius who have been ill-requited by an ungrateful country, his own method was passed by in favour of one by Lord G. Murray; and so, smarting under a sense of disappointment, the Rev. Mr. Gamble wrote a book to perpetuate the memory of his shabby treatment by the Government of the day, and thus gained a niche in the temple of fame by adding to the list of curious and rare books now to be found in the British Museum Library. In this book Mr. Gamble could not quite forget the sour grapes, and suggested that, after all, the French telegraph, and the modification which our own Admiralty had favoured, was not original, and had probably been suggested by windmill sails, the windmills on the coast of Suffolk having been used from time immemorial by smugglers for the purpose of secret correspondence with Dunkirk.

But the hard-hearted Admiralty went on with their

novel telegraph system, which, "like most other things, was at first laughed at and then adopted in England." The French system was rather more elaborate than the windmill sails, and by upright poles and crossbars, with openings between them, could "make figures for every letter in the alphabet." It was a modified form of the French system that was erected at the Admiralty — a framework of six octagonal frames, by changing the position of which any letter could be made. Similar frames were erected on a chain of posts at certain distances, extending from London to Deal, and it was claimed that by these means "very early intelligence of the sailing of the Dutch Fleet was conveyed to the Admiralty," which by the same means conveyed its orders to the Admiral in the Downs—one of the first pieces of official telegraphy in England.

An estimate for the erection and outfit of fifty telegraph houses of a more permanent kind, which appeared in the newspapers at the beginning of the century, shows what was the official staff required for working, and the cost of each "telegraph office." In the first place, there were required two telegraph clerks or "look-out officers" for each of the watch-towers at 5*s.* per day each; then four men for each station at 2*s.* 6*d.* a day each were "employed below to draw the wires and change the figures." A carpenter had to be kept for each station at 3*s.* 6*d.* a day, and then there was a housekeeper, and over them all "four riding surveyors" for the fifty stations, each to receive a guinea a day. By this method it was possible for the Admiralty to get a short message to Deal in a few minutes. A variant of the Semaphore telegraph is thus referred to (in 1797): "The signal staffs, which have been lately erected on the different points of the coast of England, are a number of large balls or hollow globes about three feet in diameter and painted black. These are slung on a kind of yard, which is then hoisted on the

main staff, and by their number or position give the intelligence which has been preconcerted they should signify."

But there was one drawback about this clumsy telegraphing by signals with which the century began, and that was that the work of the men at the watch-towers suddenly ceased in foggy weather, and communication by invisible means was not yet possible. If telegraphy by sight had thus its limits, the medium of sound did not promise any better results. In fact, this had been tried many centuries before, for the Romans had their telephones, forming a line of communication on their fortifications, through a tube running from tower to tower on their earthworks, and there were signals by guns at sea, but the future of telegraphy belonged to the invisible world. It says little for our knowledge of the past, or for our sense of justice, that we are too often prone to assume in these latter days, that because we are now able to harness the invisible forces of the universe for our daily service, while our fathers were content to swing clumsy beams of wood in the air for their telegraphic messages, therefore we are the people to whom this wonderful knowledge of the subtle forces of nature was exclusively vouchsafed ! It was certainly not lack of discernment of these things on the part of our forefathers, but rather the imperfect state of mechanical knowledge and the power of turning discoveries to practical account in daily life, which delayed the coming of the electric telegraph and other kindred agencies of modern life until so far into the nineteenth century.

Here are a few glimpses of the powers of the invisible world, into which the moderns have so completely entered, which were obtained by men of long ago. Francis Godwin, Bishop of Hereford, as early as 1583 invented "a secret method of carrying on correspondence much quicker than writing." But, for his pains, the good Bishop was suspected of being in league with the witches and the evil one, and

when, some years later, his work came to the ears of that past-master in demonology, James I, the Bishop took the precaution of letting His Majesty into the secret, and showed that it was a "fact and not a fiction." The Bishop afterwards published a book, "The Mysterious Messenger," in which he did suggest the possibility of making use of the spiritual world as a medium. He found some difficulty in this at the outset, and frankly owned that "it is not so easy to employ a good angel, nor safe dealing with a bad one." So the spirit world was left alone, and even Shakespeare, in his suggestion of putting "a girdle round the earth in forty minutes," gave no hint as to how it was to be done. The Marquis of Worcester next tried his hand in his "Century of Inventions," published in 1655, and states that he had "invented a method how, at a window, as far as eye could discover black from white, a man may hold discourse with his correspondent." He also points to a knowledge of a way of doing it "by night as well as by day, though as dark as pitch is black," which brings us to within a measurable distance of modern telegraphy.

It is interesting, as part of the romance of this wonderful century, to see what our fathers thought of some of the things they were not quite able to grasp, and especially of the use of electricity as a means of telegraphic communication, for they did think about it sometimes even a hundred years ago. In the "Telegraphic Observations" collected by the Rev. J. Gamble, in which various theories are set forth, there is this interesting reference to electricity, which would surely draw a smile from the magician, Mr. T. A. Edison, in his workshops to-day. The Royal Chaplain, whose own telegraph did not meet with royal favour, is comparing electricity with water as a medium of communication when he writes. "Full as many, if not greater, objections will probably operate against every contrivance where electricity shall be used as a vehicle of communication. The velocity with which this fluid passes,

where the conductors are tolerably perfect," is described as among the properties "which appear to have given rise to the idea of using it as a medium of correspondence," but the writer adds that "the whole success of the experiment would likewise depend on an apparatus liable to an infinite number of accidents, scarce in the power of human foresight to guard against." That was the view which did serve the people of this country for the rest of the Royal Chaplain's life and more.

For forty years after the above speculations were advanced, our fathers had to wait for a solution which would give effect to the crude idea, here dismissed with a shake of the head by a man who saw the century begin. How slow and imperfect was the germ of the modern telegram, even when the Queen came to the Throne, and how enormously the telegraphic system has grown, may be understood by a few facts and figures relating to the infancy of telegrams as compared with their operation to-day. With the firstfruits of the electric telegraph at home, men soon began to think of the advantage of extending it to other lands. The beginning was a modest one from Dover to Calais. From this small beginning submarine cables were made to span wider and wider distances. Under seas and over lands the subtle messenger sped, until the remotest parts of the earth were brought into speaking distance with one another. It was an epoch of the deepest significance when the two great English-speaking peoples clasped hands beneath the sea. That great event was the starting-point for other extensions, until the islands and continents of the world were connected by a network of cables which now extend to 170,000 nautical miles, ranging from cables of short distances of a quarter of a mile up to the span of an ocean, the total being sufficient to encircle the earth seven times over; and the capital employed in this vast enterprise of submarine telegraphy amounts to £50,000,000. The land-lines of the world extend to 662,000 miles, or

about twenty-seven times the circuit of the earth, and the capital employed therein is equal to £62,000,000.

The "girdle round the earth" was for a long time of but little practical use to the average man or woman, for in the early days of the Atlantic cable the cost of a twenty-word message was £20, or £1 a word. Later on the price was cut down to £10 for twenty words; then a person could send a short message of ten words for £5. In 1872 the price was reduced to 4s. per word, and now the rate is 1s., or just one-twentieth of the cost at first.

But the romance of modern telegraphy does not end with the privilege of sending a message at 1s. per word across the Atlantic, or the typical twelve-word telegram for 6d. at home. Indeed, it was quite possible with the old Semaphore telegraph to get a single message of half a dozen words from London to the coast in less time than it sometimes takes to get a single message sent and delivered to-day, provided always that the Semaphore man or 'look-out officer' was not stopped by the fog. The wonderful character of modern telegraphy is to be seen rather in the enormous mass of intelligence which may be communicated between distant places, and the rapidity with which intricate and detailed matters may be despatched over the whole country in a flash and by the turning of a handle, and the enormously increased number of persons who can make use of it. The number of ordinary private telegraph messages despatched for the postal year 1900 reached the astonishing total of 74,151,385, and if to these are added Press, Foreign, and Government messages, etc., the total reached over ninety million telegrams in twelve months!

When the first electric telegraph was established, the speed of transmission was from four to five words a minute. In 1849 the average rate for newspaper messages was seventeen words a minute; the present pace of the electric telegraph between London and Dublin reaches 463 words, and thus what was regarded as miraculous sixty years ago

has multiplied a hundredfold in half a century. But this is automatic telegraphy as distinguished from telegraphy by hand. The speed at which a person can transmit a message by hand is limited by the muscular capacity and sometimes also the health of the operator. About twenty to twenty-five words a minute is a fair average, so long as each letter is to be made by hand; but automatic telegraphy has long since taken the place of hand-signalling in important centres where messages of great length have to be dealt with. By punching the code signals into strips or tapes and then running these rapidly through "by machinery," it is possible to transmit important messages to the people—the burning words of the orator at some great crisis, or of the war correspondent's picture of the battlefield—at an almost incredible speed. The latest transmittor is capable of working up to a speed of 450 words per minute, and as the average telegraphic word is calculated at five letters, you have the astonishing rate of $37\frac{1}{2}$ code signals made every second! "Without this system [the automatic system]," says Mr. Preece, "it would be impossible to transmit the enormous amount of intelligence sent telegraphically all over the country. One million words are sometimes sent on one night." As an indication of the perfection to which the Wheatstone automatic apparatus has now been brought, it may be stated that on February 3rd, 1892, 550 and 600 words per minute were printed at Birmingham, the racing circuit from Leicester serving simultaneously Birmingham, London, Manchester, and Liverpool.

The inventions of Pollak and Virag, of Vienna, have carried quick telegraphy still further, and claim to be able to send upwards of 100,000 words an hour, or more than 1,500 words a minute. Coupled with this astonishing speed, the same inventors are at work upon increasing the wonders of telegraphic printing and writing in letters instead of signs. Their further inventions promise to send

over the wires 2,500 words a minute, or more than forty words a second, and, what is more wonderful still, to write automatically at the receiving end 1,000 words a minute, or about forty times as fast as one can write ordinary long-hand with the pen.

Even with these remarkable feats the wonders of telegraphy are not by any means exhausted, and there may be other marvels in store of which we are only getting the barest hints. Modern telegraphy has hitherto proceeded along the lines of visible means and connecting wires. With the closing and opening of the gates of the two centuries, another chapter, even more wonderful and romantic than anything that has gone before, has opened in the transmission of intelligence without any visible means of communication between the sender and the receiver. It must not be supposed, however, that this is exclusively a modern affair ; our grandfathers often had some ideas a little in advance of their time, even though they were unable to put them into practice. Definite experiments in telegraphing without wires were made as early as 1849, when a Scotchman named Lindsay read a paper before the British Association on "Telegraphing without Wires." His medium was, however, water, and experiments were made on the Tay and at Liverpool. He, like Marconi, conceived the possibility of "speaking to America" by this means. It is curious that the earlier theorists turned their thoughts to water as a medium before telegraphy was a practicable thing, for, as we have seen, the Rev. J. Gamble made his comparison between water and electricity almost to the disadvantage of the latter.

Then there is a passage in one of the old numbers of the *Spectator* which seems curiously like the present experiments in wireless telegraphy through space. It is an account of a chimerical correspondence between two friends by the help of a certain loadstone, which had

such virtue in it that if it touched two several needles, one of the needles so touched began to move, and the other, though at never so great a distance, moved at the same time and in the same manner. If he had a mind to write anything to his friend, he directed his needle to every letter that formed the words which he had occasion for, making a little pause at the end of every word or sentence to avoid confusion. The friend, in the meanwhile, saw his own sympathetic needle moving of itself to every letter which that of his correspondent pointed at.

The wonders of wireless telegraphy are fresh upon us, but a time may come when this will cease to be a subject of curiosity, or to be called by the clumsy name of 'wireless,' as an apology for departing from the old-established manner of connecting with one another only when we could be mechanically connected. In an interesting interview with Mr. Preece, late electrical engineer of the Post Office, published in the *Daily Chronicle* a short time ago, Mr. Preece showed quite an open mind to the wonderful possibilities yet in store for those who will live in the near future, and clearly indicated his belief that the romance of telegraphy is not by any means exhausted. The result of his lifelong study of the subject was described by him as "a perfect romance." "Nothing, not even astronomy, could be more profoundly interesting." "I recollect vividly," he said, "the dawn of the idea that perhaps we could telegraph without wires. . . . In 1884 I heard that a clerk in the London Telephone Exchange had been able to make out messages which were passing along the wires underground. You had the telephone circuit above the houses, and the telephone circuit beneath them. This telephone clerk was experienced in the work of telegraphy. The two circuits of wire talked to each other, so to speak; they communicated energy to one another. . . . Wireless telegraphy will, I imagine, have

a great future, and that brings us to the future of electricity generally. The practicability of wireless telegraphy is demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt. It simply remains to perfect it, as other things have been perfected."

"May there not be some new power which will enable us to communicate without any artificial assistance at all?" asked the interviewer. "You are thinking," said Mr. Preece, "of psychic powers such as Oriental races claim to possess. This perhaps may fairly be said, that scientific men are coming to believe in the existence of a new force—a psychic force of which as yet we have only had glimmerings, and hardly that. . . . We know what we know. Who can say what we don't know, but in the ripeness of time may learn?"

The evolution of a telegram thus leads us to the heights, to the Alpine heights, of knowledge, from which you may look back upon the strange entrancing picture of the way you have come, of the difficulties of the way which have been surmounted, and of the astonishing human progress made during this 'wonderful century'—wonderful with regard to the contrast with which it opened and closes. Away back from the dim and distant past you may see a long line of men reaching up to a time almost linked with the present by the span of a single human life, standing patiently by their watch-towers, waiting eagerly for the "pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night," to spell out for them in crude, imperfect warnings symbols of danger or of opportunity, of victory or defeat, as did the old watchman, who waited for ten long years on the tower of Agamemnon's palace for the "blazing torch" which was to signal the fall of Troy. Around you to-day the near descendants of the men who lit the beacon-fires are sending waves of thought around the world, to be caught up by sympathetic instruments without any visible contact, and you think of the coming time when, without any great stretch of imagination, everyone will be able to

send, not only a telegram, not only a telegraphic portrait, to a distant friend through space, but when every man, for aught we know, may carry in his pocket his own 'sympathetic' receiver, by opening which and applying it to his ear he may listen to the gossip of the world, as the shell picked up on the sea-shore repeats the whispering music of the ocean; with this difference, that he will be able to select from the myriads of ether-waves the particular message intended for himself alone.





CHAPTER IX.

THE CORN LAWS AND THE PENNY POST.

THE agitator has always had a bad name, from Wat Tyler to the Irish Member, but the romance of agitation was bound up with a struggle during the early years of the Victorian era for the advancement of what are now considered popular causes. The repeal of the Corn Laws, the great revolt of the manufacturing classes against the landed interest, and the settled notion that it was the duty of the Government of this country to secure for the farmer a certain price for his corn, was the greatest agitation in regard to its results which this century has witnessed, apart from the great struggle over Parliamentary reform.

One of the most touching as well as heroic incidents in our public life was that of the meeting of Cobden and Bright, under the shadow of a great sorrow for one, and the stimulus of a firm conviction for both that the sorrows of the people were crying for succour and redress in many other houses. Here is the little incident described by John Bright, when, thirty-five years afterwards, he was, in July, 1877, unveiling the statue of his friend Richard Cobden at Bradford.

Bright had lost his wife only three days before Cobden called upon him, and in the presence of the shadow of death the solemn compact was made which was to link the

names of Cobden and Bright in one of the greatest agitations of the nineteenth century. "It was," said Mr. Bright, "in September, in the year 1841. The sufferings throughout the country were fearful, and you who live now [1877], but were not of age to observe what was passing in the country then, can have no idea of the state of your country in that year. At that time I was at Leamington, and I was, on the day when Mr. Cobden called upon me—for he happened to be there at the time on a visit to some relatives—I was in the depths of grief, I might almost say of despair; for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a saintly life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now,' he said, 'when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed.' I knew that the description he had given of the houses of thousands was not an exaggerated description. I felt in my conscience that there was a work which somebody must do, and therefore I accepted his invitation, and from that time we never ceased to labour hard on behalf of the resolution which we had made." "For seven years," added Mr. Bright, "the discussion on the one question—whether it was good for a man to have half a loaf or a whole loaf—for seven years this discussion was maintained, I will not say with doubtful results, for the result was never doubtful, and never could be in such a cause, but for five years or more (1841–1846) we devoted ourselves without stint; every working hour almost was given up to the discussion and to the movement in connection with this question."

On the other hand, it is interesting to see what the landed interest thought of the Corn Laws and the attempt to give the people a whole loaf. Sir James Graham, in resisting the proposals of the repealers in the House of Commons, gave an idyllic picture of rural life—"The breezy call of incense-breathing morn, the neat thatched cottage, the blooming garden, the cheerful village green"—and against this he urged that the repeal of the Corn Laws would lead to a great migration from all this loveliness to the noisy alley and the "sad sound of the factory bell." "Tell not to me any more," he said, "of the cruelties of the conveyance of the Poles to the wintry wastes of Siberia; a change is contemplated by some Members of this House, far more cruel, far more heartrending, in the bosom of our native land."

But Cobden and his friends were able to turn this 'idyllic fustian' against those who uttered it; and, speaking to the labourers upon the estate of Sir James Graham, one of the lecturers gave them this specimen of life's little ironies:—"What! six shillings a week for wages, and the morning sun, and the singing of the birds and sportive lambs, winding streams, and the mountain breeze, and a little wholesome labour—six shillings a week and all this! And nothing to do with your six shillings a week but merely pay your rent, buy your food, clothe yourselves and your families, and lay by something for old age! Happy people!" In the rural districts arguments like these could only be resisted by violence, and there was generally somebody ready with this.

When Cobden and Bright had ratified the compact in the chamber of death at Leamington, and set forth on the mission of the Anti-Corn Law League, their attention was naturally turned to the rural districts, where the battle had to be won. The landlord regarded the agitation as something like sacrilege; the farmers were taught to believe that the campaign was one in which the manufacturers were

seeking their own pockets by means of cutting down wages in their factories, and the farm labourer, if he understood what it was all about, had no power to influence the result, which it was prophesied would banish him from the soil and from his home and kindred. When, therefore, John Bright, the Rochdale Quaker, and Richard Cobden, a Sussex farmer's son who turned manufacturer, came into the rural districts to convert the landlords and the farmers, and to undeceive the labourers, they were fairly carrying the war into the enemy's camp. But even here the repeal of the Corn Laws was at that time no new topic for debate, and what had happened just before Cobden and Bright went into the Eastern Counties was very significant. Cobden had already had good reason for knowing what the campaign among the farmers of these counties meant. In 1839 he addressed meetings in these parts, and met with the most uncompromising hostility. At Huntingdon the disturbance, led by the Town Clerk, compelled the repealers to give up their ground; at Cambridge the Undergraduates joined the opposition, and a riot ensued. "It was," says Cobden's biographer, "reserved for a seat of learning to show that no brutality can equal that which is engendered by the union of violent inherited prejudice of the educated classes with the high spirits of youth, and at Cambridge the peaceful arguments of the lecturer were interrupted by a destructive and sanguinary riot. The local newspaper afterwards piously congratulated the furious gownsmen on having done their duty as the friends of good government and the upholders of the religious institutions of the country."

At Ely, at a great county meeting, the Hon. Elliot Yorke, Member for the county, had declared that "the repeal of the Corn Laws would lead to the entire ruin of the country." At Ipswich Mr. Gibson, one of the Members for the borough, changed his views on the subject, and in the bye-election in 1839 he had a bad

quarter of an hour at the hustings. No sooner had he got up to speak at the nomination than there was set up before him, upon men's shoulders, the figure of a 'turncoat' wearing a yellow coat with blue lining. Then followed a "tempest of rotten eggs," and the turncoat figure was paraded round the streets with a halter round its neck and a cap over its face ready for execution. In the confusion the Mayor declared the show of hands in favour of Mr. Gibson, but Sir Thomas Cochrane (Conservative candidate) challenged this and demanded a poll. The poll took place amidst scenes of the greatest excitement, and Mr. Gibson lost his seat by only six votes. Charges of bribery, corruption, treating, and debauchery were made on either side, and it is alleged that for the last few votes as much as £20, £30, and £40 were offered for a single vote.

By the year 1843 the famous Anti-Corn Law League was at the back of the agitation, which had increased immensely in volume and was supported by large funds supplied by manufacturing districts, and even the landed interests began to see that the necessity for some kind of alteration must be recognized. Peel's tentative measure had introduced a new sliding scale, the effect of which was to guarantee the farmer about 70s. a quarter for his wheat. Cobden and his friends received the new scale with indignation as "a bitter insult to a suffering nation," and Peel's effigy was burned in the streets of the manufacturing towns. While Parliament had lessened the duty of 750 articles, it still left the vicious principle of fixing the price of food by Act of Parliament, and so the campaign was prosecuted with renewed vigour, and once more the attack was made upon the rural districts, where remarkable scenes were witnessed.

One extraordinary effect of the Cobden and Bright campaign in the rural districts of England was to make the farmers carry their thoughts a little beyond their

barn-doors. Hitherto they had read *Bell's Weekly Messenger* for market prices, and cherished the hereditary belief in the connection of war with the price of wheat. Even now they cared little about economic forces and the relation of cause and effect in other fields, but were compelled to take a keen interest in what the League men were doing, and along with the Squire they read the reports of the speeches of Cobden and Bright with a degree of interest which was the greatest compliment to the strength of the League.



READING THE NEWS.

Farmers gathered in their thousands to listen to the arguments of the League, and if possible to refute them, recognizing that they could no longer be despised. The largest buildings in the county towns were not sufficient to hold the assemblies brought together.

When, therefore, Cobden and Bright again made their appearance in the agricultural counties, they met with a degree of attention worthy of their influence, though very often their reception affords a strange contrast with

the memory of these two famous men which now survives them. When, for instance, the man who was to be known in history as the "great tribune of the people," whose silver-tongued eloquence was destined to hold the Senate spell-bound, first made his appearance among the farmers on Cambridge market day, his greeting from them or from that quarter was not very respectful. "Hirelings of the Anti-Corn Law League" and the "itinerating nuisance" were the names applied to the speakers. This was how John Bright was greeted by the organs of the farmers and landlords on his appearance at the "great demonstration of the Anti-Corn Law League" at Cambridge market on Saturday, April 30th, 1843 :—

"The 'Nuisances' arrived about half past three. They were: Lord Brougham's satin-cravatted, velvet-collared, slippery correspondent of convenient memory, Friend Bright of Rochdale, a person of the 'gent' genius named Moore, and our old friend Mr. Falvey." The meeting was held in the Greyhound Yard, St. Andrew's Street, where the farmers were addressed by John Bright, upon whose manners and appearance in these early days of his fame the local newspaper referred to above has this choice bit of caricature :—

"Friend Bright, who figured at the paltry Anti-Corn Law meeting here the other day, is a bustling, active fellow, and the excitement of public meetings seems to have a charm for him far more potent than the noisy machinery in the town of Rochdale. One hears of him in all quarters—now at the hustings at Durham, next on the stage at Drury Lane, and then on a rickety platform at Cambridge. The public homage he receives is getting too much for his weak head, and the discretion and cunning of the well-tutored Leaguer are apt to give place to the personal vanity and self-importance of the man."

But the great movement had gone too far to be much affected by this sort of thing, and in many cases, even

among the farmers, the League meetings carried their resolutions in favour of repeal. At Norwich the leading yeomen of the county put a number of questions to Cobden, and were "so neatly and conclusively answered that the farmers who were listening to the controversy burst out into loud applause." At Lincoln, where both Cobden and Bright addressed the meeting, they also carried their resolutions. But the opposition they had to encounter in many places might very well have daunted less courageous men. At Bedford Cobden was single-handed, and "had not a single friend or acquaintance." He, however, found a very good chairman in Lord Charles Russell. "The farmers had been canvassed far and wide to attend to put down the representatives of the Anti-Corn Law League." The Assembly Rooms were too small to hold the people, and the meeting was adjourned to a field outside the town. Three waggons had been secured for the purpose, but these were seized, and a fourth had to be obtained for the speakers. But even here Cobden succeeded in getting an amendment to the landlords' resolution passed in favour of free trade, and afterwards said, "We fought a hard battle at Bedford, and after Bedford we can win anywhere."

At Huntingdon in the month of June, 1843, Cobden and Bright were both advertised to speak in the Institute, and long before the time fixed the whole street in front of the building was blocked by a great crowd of farmers, country squires, clergy, and others interested in the great question of the hour. The meeting was adjourned to the Common, where three waggons were provided, one for the League men, one for the farmers who were opposing them, and one for the reporters, and a battle royal of speechmaking ensued. Cobden was laid up with a cold and could not speak, and he addressed a letter to the "Farmers of Huntingdon." John Bright made a great speech, in the peroration of which he drew a graphic picture of the miseries of the Corn Law—"Itself the cause

of your low prices, your agricultural distress, your surplus of labour, your crowded unions, workhouses, and gaols"—and he asked them to picture England with its twenty-seven millions of people brought down to the miserable condition of pauperized serfs—there would be no rest for the landlords then. From the opposite waggon, in which the Earl of Sandwich presided, there came a speech by Mr. Rust, and then one from the League waggon by Mr. Moore; and so the great contest went on, a speech from the farmers' waggon, another from the League, and after a meeting of several hours' duration the resolution and amendment got put up to show of hands. The chairman tried to count and declared the resolution carried, while the farmers claimed that the amendment was carried.

On Saturday, April 29th, 1843, Hertford market presented a scene rarely, if ever, witnessed there. It was the day appointed for Cobden's visit to Hertford. There was an immense influx of farmers from all quarters. "From an early hour in the morning until noon vehicles of all descriptions poured into the town from every inlet." Market ordinaries were held at an earlier hour, and business was got through early in order to enable farmers to attend the great meeting. The Shire Hall proved quite inadequate, and the meeting was adjourned to the Plough Mead. Here, with Mr. Welford, of Northaw, in the chair, Cobden stood up and addressed the farmers, and that his arguments were clear and outspoken let this opening sentence testify: "I stand before a tribunal imbued with 25 years of prejudice against the cause I advocate, and yet upon the vote of this meeting before it separates am I willing to stake the fate of the Corn Laws." "On the skirts of the multitude," says Cobden's biographer, "some of the most important squires of the county sat on horseback to hear the discussion. Cobden spoke for two hours, and obtained a sympathetic hearing by his announcement that

he was the son of a Sussex farmer, that he had kept his father's sheep, and seen the misery of rent day."

In the end Cobden's confidence was justified, for upon a hostile resolution only a small minority voted, and the amendment was carried by a great majority. To Mr. Lattimore, a speaker at this meeting, and a conspicuous reformer who appeared on Hertfordshire platforms until nearly the end of his life, Cobden wrote this: "I have not forgotten the trouble you took to instruct me in the agricultural view of the question; how you visited me in London for that purpose. I recollect after making my speech in the House on the agricultural view of the Free Trade question—the most successful speech I ever made—that several county members asked me where my land lay, thinking I must be an experienced proprietor and farmer. I told them that I did not own an acre, but that I owed my knowledge to the best farmer of my acquaintance, which I have always considered you to be."

At Colchester, passions ran high, and special constables were sworn in. Cobden, opposed by Sir John Tyrrell, after a tournament lasting for six hours, "achieved a striking victory." These are but examples from a typical agricultural district; the same thing happened in Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Bucks, and away through the north into Scotland.

In 1846 the Corn Laws became a thing of the past, and Peel two years later, when the news came of the overthrow of the Government of Louis Philippe and the formation of a republic in France, added this significant hint: "This comes of trying to govern the country through a narrow representation in Parliament, without regarding the wishes of those outside. It is what this party behind me wanted me to do in the matter of the Corn Laws, and I would not do it."

Chartism and its noisy contention for the famous six points—manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by ballot, abolition of property qualification of members,

payment of members, and equal electoral districts—did not touch the life of the people as the Corn Laws had done, and so its premature ideals were destined to wait, as political ideals generally have to do.

The romance of the Penny Post is bound up with the same struggle to remove the obstacles which obstructed the channels of public life, and just as Cobden and Bright contended for a freer market for the people's daily bread, so Rowland Hill sought to open up a freer communication between all classes of the people.

It is hard to realize the condition of things which existed as regards posting and receiving letters in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and until just before Queen Victoria came to the Throne and the era of reform began. "If, when residing in Birmingham," says Sir Rowland Hill, "we received a letter from London, the lowest charge was ninepence, while the slightest enclosure raised it to eighteen-pence, and a second enclosure to 2s. 3d., though the whole missive may not weigh a quarter of an ounce."

As to the shifts of poor people who, desiring to hear from absent friends, but dreading or unable to pay for the postman's knock, everyone has heard the familiar story from the Lake District of Coleridge—and not of Sir Rowland Hill, as often reported. "One day, when I had not a shilling which I could spare, I was passing by a cottage not far from Keswick, where a letter-carrier was demanding a shilling for a letter which the woman of the house appeared unwilling to pay, and at last declined to take. I paid the postage, and when the man was out of sight she told me that the letter was from her son, who took that means to let her know that he was well, and the letter was not to be paid for. It was then opened and found to be blank." All the good woman wanted was to see the outside of the envelope and satisfy herself that it was from her son, and by that fact draw the

intended inference that he was well, and the letter-carrier could take back the 'letter'!

But equally curious, and sometimes even pathetic, were the straits to which poor people and a sympathetic rural postmaster were reduced in trying to get letters into the right hands where the receiver was only too glad to get the letter, but had not the money to pay. It seems incredible that there was a practice of running up small debts at the Post Office, as at the village shop, and yet the evidence given before the Select Committee on Postage, before the Penny Post came about, bristles with such curious revelations.

"My father kept the Post Office for many years. He used to trust poor people very often with their letters. He told me, indeed I know, he did lose many pounds by letting poor people have their letters." "We sometimes returned letters to London in consequence of the inability of the persons to whom they were addressed to raise the postage." "We frequently kept them for weeks, but where we knew the parties, let them have them, taking the chance of getting the money." "One poor woman once offered my sister a silver spoon to keep until she could raise the money [for the letter]. It came from her husband, who was in prison for debt, and she had six children and was very badly off. My sister did not take the spoon, but the woman came for the letter in a day or two."

Another postmaster said: "I sent one [letter] to a poor labouring man about a week ago. It came from his daughter. He had at first refused taking it, saying it would take a loaf of bread from his other children, and after hesitating a little time he paid the money."

"I generally let them have the letters," said another witness, "and took the chance of being paid. Sometimes I lost the postage, but generally the poor people pay me by degrees."

"I have had a letter waiting lately from the husband of a poor woman, who is at work in Wales. The charge is 9d.,

and it lay many days in consequence of her not being able to pay the postage. At last I trusted her with it."

As to the nature of the village post, here is a little picture, taken from the "Life of Cobden," concerning a Sussex village:—"There is no Post Office in the village. Every morning an old man, aged about seventy, goes into Midhurst for letters. He charges a penny for every dispatch he carries, including such miscellaneous articles as horse collars, legs of mutton, empty sacks, and wheelbarrows. His letter-bag for the whole village contains on an average two or three letters daily, including newspapers."

But the inventor who would cut a new channel for the currents of social life to flow in has generally found "a cow on the line" in the form of popular prejudice or interested motive. Directly one man struck out a line of his own, all the "stale, forbidding ways of custom" became alive with jealous croaking. Extraordinary prophecies, sometimes from parties interested in the *status quo* and sometimes not, were made about things now universally accepted. There is, for instance, almost a halo of romance lingering around the birth and infancy of a postage stamp. When the Queen came to the Throne all practical men were agreed that the clumsy system of collecting from the receivers, on delivery, the cost of carrying letters through the post, must come to an end. There were two ways out of the difficulty—one was the sale of envelopes stamped with an indication of the prepayment of the letter, and the other, more visionary as it seemed then, was the idea of an adhesive stamp to be affixed by the sender of the letter. Against the former the stationers rose in arms, and the latter had hardly become a question of practical politics. In fact, the very thought of having to stick a stamp upon a letter yourself before you could send it presented such difficulties that the level-headed *Scotsman* of that day only glanced at the alternative for the purpose of covering it with ridicule, in these terms:—

"The plan of glueing small stamps to letters would involve an amount of trouble and inconvenience which would inevitably lead to its speedy abandonment; as every man or woman in town or country who writes a letter once in six weeks or three months must have glue- or gum-pot at his or her elbow. In how many cases would the stamp fall off or be rubbed off when the letters were tumbled into the mailbags, and what is to follow then—a second payment of postage or squabbles with the letter-carrier?"

The *Scotsman's* descendants have licked a good many postage stamps since his prophecy was written, and thus solved a problem in a very simple way which to his mathematical mind seemed to admit of no solution. Even Sir Rowland Hill's idea as to postage stamps was at first crude, and took the form of this suggestion: "Let stamped covers and sheets of paper be supplied to the public from the Stamp Office or Post Office, and sold at such a price as to include the postage." The principle was there, however, and we may very well leave the Rowland Hill and Patrick Chalmers controversy over the invention of the postage stamp.

The following table shows the gradual increase of postage during the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries, and will help to account for the light in which Rowland Hill's proposal for a Penny Post was regarded. There was no further increase after 1812 than that shown below. The public would scarcely have borne any.

		1784	1797	1801	1806	1812
		d.	d.	d.	d.	d.
Not exceeding 15 miles	... ..	2	3	3	4	4
Above 20 and under 30	... ..	3	4	4	5	6
Above 50 and under 80	... ..	4	5	6	7	8
Above 170 and under 230	... ..	6	8	9	10	11
Above 400 and under 500	... ..	6	8	12	13	14

Enormous profit was made in the conveyance of letters—several hundreds per cent.—with the result that the high

rate of postage checked correspondence. When Mr. Hill's pamphlet appeared, the most incredible fact was stated that the cost of the transit of a letter from London to Edinburgh was only the 36th part of a penny. As to Rowland Hill's scheme, the public were at first surprised; some small portion perhaps thought the scheme simply ridiculous, another that it was practicable and excellent, but the larger proportion that it was too good to be true. So widespread was the interest that three editions of the pamphlet were called for in a very short time, and by this time the nation had become thoroughly satisfied with the great scheme, with the result that the entire body of Acts relating to the Post Office were repealed in 1837, and the Penny Post was sanctioned by Parliament in 1839 and took effect on 10th January, 1840, and the postage stamp came into use on the 6th of May following. Sir Rowland Hill rests in Westminster Abbey, and a statue to his memory has been erected in the General Post Office, but the simple act of posting a letter is sufficient to suggest *si monumentum quaeris, circumspice*; especially when it is added that for the postal year 1900 the number of letters posted had reached the colossal total of 2,246 millions, an average of 55 letters, 9 postcards, 17 book packets, 4 newspapers, and nearly 2 parcels, or 88 of these together, for every man, woman, and child in the United Kingdom.





CHAPTER X.

THE ROMANCE OF INVENTION AND DISCOVERY.

OF all inventions and discoveries the most universally beneficial have been those which were the simplest in their origin. They were ridiculed at first because the average man did not like change, and at most could only see the germ as the best that could be done, and never saw what the inventor saw, that beneath the chrysalis were the wings which would carry the idea far and wide on its beneficent mission. What a host of things were all ready, waiting for recognition when the century began! It is this that gives to the unfolding of such a great inheritance to the people the element of romance, that there had been absolutely nothing like these new departures in the history of the human race. Even where inventions made use of the natural elements of air, fire, and water, which had been with man from the very beginning of life, these inventions were not merely improvements on anything that had gone before, but entirely new things. It was, in fact, a new world that was opening everywhere for men, and for none more than for the great mass of the people depending upon their toil for daily bread. At one stride all the progress of the world for thousands of years had been excelled in a single day, and one little invention or discovery "overstepped the march of ages."

In the simple invention of the lucifer match, for instance, you have behind it for a starting-point the custom of all the ages ; from the time of prehistoric man, or, at any rate, from the iron age, it is in the highest degree probable that men had contrived to light a fire exactly in the same way as our grandfathers did until 1827, and as many of them did until many years later, namely, in the same fashion as the young woman in the accompanying picture is doing.



STRIKING A LIGHT.

They simply relied upon the flint, steel, and tinder-box, and the clumsy sulphur sticks, as their ancestors had done for thousands of years. That long spell of custom was broken through by an accident which, with the spread of

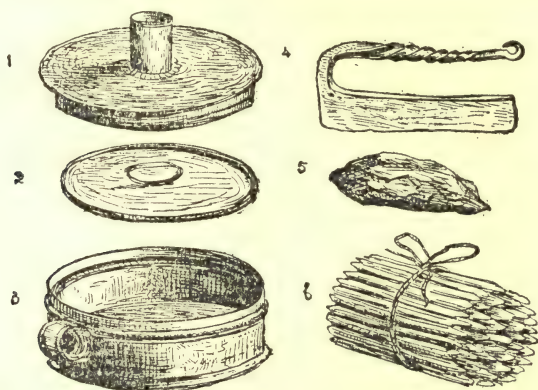
chemical knowledge, was bound to have happened sooner or later. About the year 1827 Mr. John Walker, chemist and druggist of Stockton-on-Tees, was preparing some lighting mixture for his own use, when a match, after being dipped in the preparation, took fire by accidental friction upon the hearth, whereas all previous matches required to be applied to a fire to light. This was the first friction match ever made. Mr. Walker took up the hint thus accidentally disclosed to him, and made friction matches, sold them, and with them a piece of sandpaper to strike them on. He began this sale in the month of August, 1827, and a Stockton solicitor (Mr. Hixon) was his first customer. The matches were sold fifty in a box at a shilling a box.

Sir Isaac Holden, whose life shared the romance of the lucifer match, was next on the scene, and is better known in connection with the invention. While giving lectures on chemistry at the Castle Street Academy at Reading, the young man from Cumberland had a similar experience to Mr. Walker, but two years later. Of this experience he says: "In the morning I used to get up at four o'clock in order to pursue my studies, and I used at that time the flint and steel, in the use of which I found very great inconvenience. Of course I knew, as other chemists did, the explosive material that was necessary in order to produce instantaneous light, and the idea occurred to me to put under the explosive mixture, sulphur. I did that and published it in my next lecture, and showed it. There was a young man in the room whose father was a chemist in London, and he immediately wrote to his father about it, and shortly afterwards lucifer matches were issued to the world." He, like Mr. Walker, was urged to go and take out a patent, but each thought it so small a matter as not to be worth while. To the Stockton chemist, therefore, the priority belongs of the invention of the lucifer match, though its sale in London did most to bring it into notice.

But the tinder-box was destined to last a good number of years later, for the prejudice against the lucifer match was not easily overcome, and at first its use was like the conjuring trick to astonish country folk. On this point Mr. Gibbs, the Aylesbury antiquary, told a good story of a youth who went up to London, and came back with all the cockney conceit of one who had "been on the top of St. Paul's and through the Thames Tunnel"; made the Aylesbury young fellows look small by telling them that their County Hall, the grandest building they could imagine, was no larger than Day & Martin's blacking-shop, and that their church would stand in one of the corners of St. Paul's. He then played off a joke upon them, which astonished the country lads beyond measure. Going to the wall to keep off the wind, he "put something into his mouth, and in withdrawing it in less than a moment, exhibited a flaming match and said—'There! you've nothing of this kind here at Aylesbury. It is a new match now to be had in London, and is called a lucifer!' He then produced a very small box containing a few more, on which he had expended sixpence." The date for this, Mr. Gibbs gives as about 1829, and he adds that he heard nothing more of lucifers for some years after. But the cockney lad gave him one of the matches as a special favour, and this is what happened: "I took the marvellous match home to my mother and struck it against the chimney-piece, when to her surprise it gave out a brilliant flame. 'Now,' said I, 'you may throw away your tinder-box, for these new-fashioned matches are to be had in London.' 'No,' she said, 'no such things about my house, matches which light themselves will find no place here. Why, we should some night be all burnt to death in our beds! Give me my old-fashioned tinder-box.'"

It was years before the uncanny little things could be trusted. Even in America, where these dangerous little

articles with all their charm bid fair to be "a heavy curse to the community," in the year before the Queen came to the Throne there was a storekeeper in Salem who was commended by the local newspaper for never having them on his premises, and for showing "his wisdom" by "sticking to the old-fashioned flint, steel, and tinder." What these old materials were which the good woman and the Salem man still preferred to trust in, will be seen in the accompanying illustration.



1. Lid with socket for candle. 2. Damper. 3. Tinder-box.
4. Steel. 5. Flint. 6. Matches.

It is interesting to see what was the next stage when our grandfathers had struck a light. In the form of the cheap rushlight, which made darkness visible, or the cotton-wicked candle, which so frequently needed the 'snuffers' or 'smitchers' to keep it in trim, or to 'dout' it when no longer required—in one form or another the tallow candle was the fountain of light for our grandfathers,—on the domestic hearth where tall wooden stands with circular tops gave light in the spacious chimney corner, in the drawing-room of gentlemen's houses in groups, and in similar devices which lit up city windows for public illuminations on great occasions of national rejoicing. The men who went down to the deep in ships owed their

protection to the candles, lit up by flint, steel, and tinder-box, in the lighthouses on our rock-bound coasts.

Apart from the appearance of coal-gas in the streets—the first appearance in the open air being the lighting of Westminster Bridge in 1813—the latter half of the century has witnessed a transformation in the poor man's light which is a part of the romance of discovery in the treasures of the earth. The discovery of the great oil wells in Russia, Canada, and America, with the advent of the argand lamp, has carried us a long way beyond the rushlight, the cotton candle, and the 'smitchers.' From the modest but smart 1s. 6d. lamp in the homes of rural England to the forty-million fortune of Rockefeller, the American Oil King, represents a chapter of romantic contrasts as great as anything that has happened in the domestic life of the people or in the commerce of the world.

With the electric light a new world was unfolded. For thousands of years men of all nations and races have watched with awe the track of the unseen force which rends the heavens, lights up the track of the storm, and burns its way through all obstacles foreign to its operation, and yet to-day we have harnessed this terrible giant of light, heat, and motion to the car of the nineteenth century's progress. To have controlled the mysterious potency of Franklin's Promethean spark, until it can be sold just like any other article of commerce, is perhaps the most wonderful chapter in the romance of invention and discovery which the world has yet seen. But the light and heat which we obtain through the agency of electricity in forms beneficial to men in the home, in the streets, and in the hospitals, and in the promotion of medical science, are only a part of the new world. Our grandfathers, who wondered incredulously at Mother Shipton's prophecy, simply could not imagine such a thing as a trade in the buying and selling of one of the forces of the

universe which no one had ever seen ! From the rushlight in the old chimney corner to the Palace of Light at the Paris Exhibition, and from the candles that lit up the lighthouses on our coasts to modern searchlights, we have travelled a long way. When the century began they stuck candles into the lantern of the Eddystone and other lighthouses ; to-day the mammoth searchlight, which blazes from the summit of the Echo mountain in California, 3,500 feet above sea-level, has a light of 3,000,000 candle-power, and has a beam so powerful that it may be seen " 150 miles away across the Pacific Ocean," and so brilliant that " a newspaper can be read by its light 35 miles distant."

But of all the branches of public service which electricity is rendering to society, perhaps that connected with locomotion and communication is not the least remarkable. For the handsomely appointed cars now travelling along the street without any visible force, the power is run silently along the wires from an engine away out of sight, and it is even possible for the cars to be propelled by the mere contact with the rails upon which they run, and a whole train of cars may thus be brilliantly lighted and carried along by invisible means. For the romance of the play of invisible force in the daily comforts and luxuries of life, however, you must go to the New World, to the great American continent, the home of the Napoleon of invention, where electric traction has left the Old World far behind. In six years the American Republic has provided 12,000 miles of electric railway and tram lines, at a cost of £60,000,000, and carries the public great distances by these means at " the lowest conceivable fares." In Europe there are only 1,422 miles open, 707 in Germany, and only 87 in the United Kingdom. This is not because we have no inventors and clever men enough to keep pace with the Americans, but is simply due to our old habit of looking for romance to the past,

when it properly belongs to the future, and our respect for vested interests. But the popularity of the underground electric railways and electric trams we have introduced has sealed the doom of all other kinds of communication which can be superseded by the new motive-power.

The silent but pathetic tragedy of the London tram and bus horse, working itself out with incredible wear and tear, and the cruel monotony of the treadmill of our London streets; disappointed crowds who, in certain parts of the City, have to fight for the privilege of paying for a ride; the bitter cry of the millions huddled together in the slums unable to get away in overcrowded trains from the scene of daily toil to healthier homes in the country; and the oppressive railway rates and lack of facilities for getting readily across country—all these facts, humanitarian, social, and commercial, cry aloud for such a remedy as electric traction seems most likely to bring. London is waking up at last, and, taught by the example of more enterprising provincial towns, as well as by other countries, is rapidly preparing for the coming revolution in our means of communication, which will be almost as wonderful as the transfer from the stage-coach to the railway train.

In the marvels of photography, as in those of electricity, there was a new world to conquer, and we now reap the benefits of the discovery of a means of making light repeat the wonderful pictures it reveals. By this discovery the whole of life has been enriched with the greatest of human enjoyments, and to the very poorest have been opened up what even the rich could not enjoy in the past—faithful portraits of absent friends, and a university of education through the eye, in the wealth of pictures which now find their way to the humblest homes in the land.

In the invention of the phonograph, as a means of compelling the vibrations of the air to write themselves down for future repetition, there is a whole chapter of romance as you listen to the revolving cylinders calling

up, if not "spirits from the vasty deep" and the "touch of a vanished hand," yet the voices of those dead and gone, in all their characteristics of persuasion, power, or pathos which distinguished them in life. What this remarkable invention means may be realized by imagining that some clever scientist in the ancient world, upon experiments intent, had accidentally pricked his finger and been led to think of the invention as Edison was in a later day. The simple expedient had been there waiting all through the ages, and the difference would have been that instead of the speeches of Gladstone and others, we might have had repeated to us the voices of Pharaoh, of Moses, of Socrates, of Plato, of Demosthenes, of Cicero, of Savonarola, and of Luther.

In his book, "The Wonderful Century," Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace gives the nineteenth century the credit of thirteen first-class inventions and practical applications of science to every-day life—railways, steam navigation, the electric telegraph, the telephone, friction matches, gas, the electric light, photography, the phonograph, the Röntgen rays, the spectrum analysis, anæsthetics, and antiseptics; and to these adds, among "Theoretic discoveries" which have widened human knowledge, (1) the germ theory of the zymotic diseases, and (2) the nature of meteors and comets and the meteoritic theory of the universe.

In the progress of the arts and sciences there is one thing that should be added without which this rate of progress would have been impossible. The marvellous development of the printing-press, though not in itself a nineteenth-century invention, has indirectly made many other things possible. Eighty years ago the *Times* newspaper was printed with a hand-press, and struck off with much labour at 300 copies per hour; now in many of the great newspaper offices a speed of 100,000 copies per hour is possible, and the slow process of picking up types

by hand is being superseded by machines which cast the metal type, and set it in lines ready for printing, simply by pressing keys like playing a pianoforte, or writing letters by the machinery of the typewriter, another nineteenth-century invention, which, in connection with shorthand, has revolutionized our business methods. The development of the art of printing during the past 100 years has been a greater change, so far as the mass of the people are concerned, than was the invention of printing itself four centuries earlier; for it has made the benefits of the art accessible to all classes, and given to the very poorest the key to the great university of books.

England has not been very kind to the inventor, because, if you invent a means of lifting the burden or removing the obstacle from the path of your fellow-men, you at once come into conflict with the men who are taking the dividends of the *status quo*. New countries are free from the swaddling bands of vested interest, and are thus more keenly alive to the enormous factor of mechanical, technical, and scientific progress as applied to every-day life. When, however, you come from the inventor to the man of discovery, whether in the treasures of the earth or in the vast fields opened by the contemplation of other worlds, where there are no vested interests to consider, this country takes a foremost place. Few things have been more romantic in the field of discovery than the diamond-mines in the regions where our soldiers have been recently at war with the Boers. Beneath the horrors of the siege of Kimberley were the great workshops, so to speak, where 20,000 coloured men toiled in blue clay to light up the windows of Bond Street and the ballrooms of Belgravia. Only a generation ago a hunter seeking shelter in a Dutch farmhouse, near the crossing of the Vaal river, where the British troops crossed in the famous march for the relief of Mafeking, saw the Dutchman's children playing on the floor with bright pebbles from the bed of the river, which proved

to be diamonds! A Hottentot in the bush found, about the same time, a glittering stone of great value, now known as the Countess of Dudley's jewel, the "Star of South Africa." From this small beginning Kimberley owes its existence, and since then we actually shipped, from 1867 to 1893, from 10 to 12 tons of diamonds, to the value of £70,000,000.

Gold-mines have been greater discoveries than diamond-fields, and have not been confined to California, Australia, or the Klondike. In South Africa, again, the romance as well as the gold cropped out. In 1886 the discovery of the De Kaap Goldfields caused the town of Barberton to spring up like a mushroom; hotels, stores, banks, hospitals, churches, sprang up where lions had prowled a few weeks before; and a local newspaper, which had to get printed on blotting-paper, bill-heads, and whatever came to hand until the next bullock waggons arrived with a supply, came out with this little bit of Christmas cheer: "Our mineral wealth has been determined, and we are known to the world as the eventual resuscitators of universal commerce." Johannesburg was of similar mushroom growth. But the great romantic rush and flush of the 'gold fever' was doomed to many disappointments, although for the time being the diggers were there, as in Charles Reade's graphic word-picture: "If a hundred emperors and kings died to-day, their places could be filled to-morrow, but the world could not do without us, and our find! We are noblemen, we are whatever we like to be." And yet, such are the passions of men, that over the spot at Barberton, where that bright little paragraph was printed on the last sheet of blotting-paper left in Barberton, our soldiers have had the hardest bit of their fighting. How closely this pioneer work of setting up the outposts of empire is connected with commercial enterprise may be gathered from the simple fact that in the great stretch of country known as

Rhodesia, north of the Transvaal, out of 250 mining companies, 200 are managed or financed from the City of London.

But discoveries in the treasures and peoples of the earth are not confined to the romance of the diamond-fields or the gold-mines. In the Egyptian Gallery of the British Museum stands the famous Rosetta Stone, discovered on the banks of the Nile, which turned out to be a kind of dictionary or key to the wealth of Oriental literature in stone, which is throwing a flood of light upon the ancient civilization in Bible lands. Then the romance of discovery has carried us to other worlds, and by the spectrum we are able to submit these worlds to analysis. A very romantic chapter in the domain of human knowledge, and in the story of the heavens, was the discovery of the farthest known member of the solar system. Fifty years ago two mathematicians, M. Leverrier, of Paris, and Mr. J. C. Adams, of the Cambridge University, by mathematical calculations based upon the law of gravitation, found that the planet Uranus, the farthest planet of our solar system then known, was being influenced at one point of its orbit by some disturbing factor. They calculated the position of the supposed new planet by the disturbance and the 'pull' upon Uranus at this point in its orbit, and although it was about a thousand million miles from Uranus, they mapped out its position, where the planet Neptune was actually discovered with the telescope a short time afterwards by Dr. Galle, of Berlin, and thus was achieved the greatest triumph of mathematical science ever known.

The romance of invention and discovery, by which the nineteenth century has outstripped all the ages in the progress it has made, does not consist merely in the cleverness of making things of a mechanical turn, great as that progress has been, but in the fact that we have learned the art of shifting the leverage of work as no other age has dreamed of. We have also found the keys of a veritable

fairyland of wonders, where the giant powers of the laws of the universe stand waiting, ready to be our patient, unerring slaves, demanding no wages, and only this one condition—that we allow them to go the way appointed to them by a Higher Wisdom, or take the consequences of our own temerity.

From the daily round of life, the romance of discovery has carried us from the very smallest of domestic economies, the humble lucifer match, to the farthest outpost of the empire of human knowledge, where the last ray of the sun faintly falls. Beyond even this point, the great Lick and Rosse telescopes have opened to us peeps into the great mystery of the stars : forty million blazing suns, in which our own sun would probably be lost to our view, and yet forming in themselves, as Sir Robert Ball has said, “but a dewdrop compared with the great Atlantic, the invisible universe beyond, the wonders of which ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.’”





CHAPTER XI.

THE ROMANCE OF EDUCATION.

LIKE the romantic element in many other departments in national life, during the last one hundred years, the romance of education is chiefly to be seen in the contrast between very small beginnings and the progress of later years. In this case, however, the romance lacks something of that crowning degree of contrast which has been attained by the application of art and science to the needs and conveniences of the people during the latter half of the century. With the great mass of the people, immediate needs and necessities must ever stand first, and their desires and aspirations generally come afterwards, if they come at all. Food, clothing, shelter — this is nature's own order of human wants, and as you ascend from the primitive man to the millionaire, the industries multiply, but for the common people it is out of their need and necessities, and at the most their conveniences, which the inventor and the middleman enrich themselves, and for this that the toiler works for wages. All through the greater part of the advancement in commercial and industrial progress, therefore, the element of education and the power to think, and the contemplation of the beautiful on the Alpine heights of life, which are made possible by education, remained the luxury of the few, and have not even yet become the full heritage of the many. Still, from the dame schools—and such dame schools too!—to

a system of national education for the people, is a very good beginning in the upward path, and holds within it no small part of the great chapter of romance which the past one hundred years of progress has unfolded.

Examples of the romance of the power of education to transform the surroundings of individual lives between the cradle and the grave are not wanting. George Stephenson, from pit-boy to the companion of kings and princes, Presidents Lincoln and Garfield, and many other instances might be named of the power of education and the genius of a tireless industry. But these sketches are concerned mainly with the romance of contrast in the great mass of the people. There were ardent reformers here and there, who not only had some concern for the mental as well as the bodily starvation of the poor, which everywhere prevailed in those bitter years with which the century began, but who also caught a prophetic glimpse of the coming time when an educated people should arise. One old writer in 1806, who caught such a glimpse of the future through a little opening of a modest proposal to establish an evening school for the instruction of farm servants, was carried away by the beatific vision of what might be possible if such a proposal should be extended over the land : "We should hear the humble countryman talk of the heroes of old, catch the patriotic inspiration from the action of his great forefathers, while wisdom would extend her protecting hand and claim the nation for her own."

The first effort at the education of the people was a charitable affair ; something like the organization of a soup kitchen, for which generous souls gave out of their abundance doles for the 'poorer sort.' There were then absolutely no books to read as we understand general reading to-day, but as very few of the common people could read, this was of little consequence; and the first attempts at education began on Sundays, for there was no other time for the children to give up from their labour

on week-days. The first business of the Sunday-school, therefore, was to teach the child the alphabet, to spell words, and so gradually to read verses of the Scripture. The Sunday School Society, at the end of last century, were taking pleasure in their annual report that during the previous two years they had distributed 93,659 spelling-books, besides copies of the Testament and the Bible, and that "the benefits of this charity are spreading to all parts of the country." Of necessity the first Sunday-schools were partly secular institutions, and their rules have a very quaint sound to modern ears.

"At a Vestry it is considered that the Church Wardens do put the Galary in proper order for the reception of children belonging to a Sunday School."

"Boys to be admitted at the age of 6 years and continue to 12, girls to be admitted at the age of 6 years and continue to 14."

"The Masters to receive the scholars at 9 o'clock in the morning, and to go with them to Church at 11. The scholars are to return to school at 2, and go to Church at 3, and return from Church to school and continue there until between 5 and 6 o'clock."

"The Master to be paid 6 guineas a year for his trouble."

Another set of similar rules is more explicit upon personal points, and even more exacting as to the hours the little flock had to continue at the school, so as to make the most use of the one day in the week when they could possibly receive instruction:—

"Children are to appear in the schoolroom at 8 o'clock in the morning during the summer months and at 9 in the winter, and again, both summer and winter, at half past 2 o'clock in the afternoon, with clean face and hands, hair combed, and decently clothed according to the abilities of their parents, to proceed to Church and from thence to school, there to remain receiving instruction, until 6 o'clock in the evening."

"The teacher shall receive one shilling per score, and have an assistant when the number requires it."

"Children not coming to school in time are to wear a mark inscribed 'idle boy or girl,' in large letters, during church and the whole or part of the school time."

"Children behaving ill to wear a mark of 'naughty boy or girl.'"

That is the kind of thing to be met with in documents in the old parish chests of rural England. While this little soup-kitchen standard of education was being set up on the only day in the week on which the little ones were not toiling with their fathers and mothers for daily bread, there was a more spreading movement on foot for day schools wherever this could be done. Joseph Lancaster, the eminent Quaker, was a leader in the movement, and was getting influential support in high places for his system of education, afterwards known as the Lancastrian System of Monitorial Education. In 1811 there was, for instance, a meeting at the Freemasons' Tavern, with the Duke of Bedford in the chair, at which His Grace stated that it was needless to dwell upon the merits of the Lancastrian system, and then he added what must sound very strangely to modern democratic ears—"or to observe that the education of the poor had a uniform tendency to bring about a proper subordination." Where education was neglected we could only expect misery and poverty. There could be no greater proof of the sincere desire of His Majesty for the good of his people than the manner in which he had patronized Joseph Lancaster. A report of the Trustees stated that during the year 1800 Mr. Joseph Lancaster had travelled no less than 3,775 miles, and in the many new schools founded 14,000 or 15,000 children were taught. The Duke of Kent gave the meeting royal support, and moved a resolution declaring Joseph Lancaster the benefactor of the nation, and that he merited the approbation and support of the Empire at large.

Mr. Lancaster declared that whatever good he had been able to do was owing to his father, who had supported him from his small income when he was carrying through his plans.

In 1816 the House of Commons set about inquiring by select Commissions into the subject of the education of the 'lower orders,' as the people were labelled, and it seemed as though education 'was in the air,' but when in 1833 a Bill was passed granting £20,000 for the purpose of education there was not a very sanguine view taken of the subject. Cobbett said the sole result would be to increase the number of schoolmasters and mistresses, "that new race of idlers." The only means of applying the modest £20,000 was through voluntary agencies of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor, carried on by the clergy of the Established Church, and the British and Foreign School Society, carried on by Nonconformists, the forerunners of our National and British Schools to-day. But all this philanthropic effort—it was little more than that for many years—only reached a few privileged places, and the great mass of the 'lower orders' were untouched; and at the time Joseph Lancaster was urgently desiring to see "the youth of the Kingdom educated," probably not more than one in ten of the children could read, much less write.

In this educational day of small things all the romance was to be found, not so much in the darkness and the ignorance which prevailed, as in the attempts to dispel the gloom by here and there a village domine, with a little pious endowment to support his efforts, and a strongly marked individuality, to be more remembered than the lessons he taught. The 'schools,' too, were as odd as the schoolmaster was sometimes eccentric. In country villages the favoured parish which could boast a 'school' was the one with the endowment of some pious benefactor. Here are a few pictures of schools as remembered by the old

inhabitants of country villages and towns, who have now gone to their rest :—

“ Mr. ———, our old schoolmaster, taught a few of us in a little room over the church porch. He was a man of immense corporation, and although I do not remember the lessons I learned from him I remember having to make him huge slices of toast when he lodged at our house.”

“ Mr. ——— used to conduct his private academy in an old malting, and we used to climb up the outside ladder from the street into the upper storey where the academy was carried on.”

Still more primitive was the ‘school’ at which Will Carleton, the Irish novelist, was educated. It was built, warmed, and furnished in this wise : “ The people built for the master a sod-house, scooped out of the bank on the road side, and each scholar brought two sods of turf with him in the morning to help to warm it ; big stones did for seats.”

But if schools which got set up here and there were small, and if teachers were sometimes as bad as Macaulay painted them—“ The refuse of other callings, discarded servants of ruined tradesmen who cannot do a sum of three ; who would not be able to write a common letter, who do not know whether the earth is a cube or a square, and can’t tell whether Jerusalem is in Asia or America, whom no gentleman would trust with the key of his cellar and no tradesman would send on a message”—if they were sometimes as bad as this, they were only matched by the means available for learning to “ read English and write a plain hand,” which were incredibly primitive in their character. The contents and the selection of the reading-books, which must have been a sheet anchor of the old curriculum of the charity schools, were beyond description. There was no common standard reading-book for the class as every school is now able to use, but

the supply was often dependent upon whatever book could be brought from the homes of the people, and the medley brought together was often ridiculous enough! On this subject I take the following paragraph from Mr. Graham Balfour's book on "The Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland":—

"Nowhere was a supply of good school books more wanted than in Ireland. In the old days instruction was almost entirely individual, and every child used to bring with it to school whatever book it could get in which to learn reading. 'It has occurred to a member of the Commission' of 1824 'to see in a School in the County of Sligo a child holding the New Testament in its hands sitting between two others, one of whom was supplied with "The Forty Thieves" and the other with "The Pleasant Art of Money-Catching," while another at a little distance was perusing the Mutiny Act, and all reading aloud their respective volumes at the same moment.'"

The list of books actually used in four counties is given in the same report, and ranges from Milton, Locke, Dusseldorf on Fratricide, "Lydia" (a loose novel), "The Academy of Compliments," and the "History of Philander and Fashaway," etc., etc. But the primitive methods of supplying the reading-books for the reading lesson in school was not more curious than the method of giving the writing lesson in some of the schools in the early years of the century. In the West of England, and doubtless in other parts too, the plan adopted required neither copy-books nor slate. A more convenient material was to be found in the nearest sandpit on the sea-shore. Taking a level board of convenient length and breadth, the old writing master would spread over this an even coating of sand. In the smooth surface of the sand he would write a copy for the pupil to follow, reminding one of the scriptural picture in which the Saviour is represented as writing on the ground. One great advantage of this

method was that no copybook was required and no slates were broken. All that was required was that when the sand-board was written all over, the smooth surface could be easily renewed, the sand smoothed out again, and a clean sheet ready to be written upon again. The old sand writing-table was like the stocks on the village green, a parochial institution. It was simply a long board with a rim round it, upon which fine sand was spread an eighth of an inch thick. Upon this sand the village domine, where such flourished, or the clergyman, after Sunday morning's service, would write a copy with the forefinger—just as boys like to write their names in the snow—and the scholar had to imitate this as best he could. A levelling board, such as the plasterer uses on walls, was all that was required when the board had been written all over, to spread out the sand smoothly again ready for the next copy. Until a very few years ago, one occasionally met with an old man who learned the art of writing in this primitive manner, and there may be some of the old sand-board pupils living yet.*

In its way the foregoing was education of a certain kind; in fact, the schools above mentioned may be described as the higher-grade schools, for all excepting the well-to-do in country districts, when the century was young. For the condition of the 'poorer sort' of children in our country villages, and even in some towns, you have to go down to the educational bed-rock of the dame school. The dame school was completely *sui generis*, and perhaps hardly deserves a place in our educational systems. It was often an institution for taking charge of children too young to work, who were few and young enough in the time when child labour was universal, or more often the school where the scholars had to do such work as could be done by

* A sand writing-table is reported to be still kept at Dennington in Suffolk, says a writer in a recent number of the *Harmsworth Magazine*.

children in their homes, as the straw-plaiting industry in Beds, Bucks, and Herts, and the dame who kept the school had simply to see that the amount of task-work set for each child was performed, measured up at the end of every hour, with the terror of the 'yardstick' hanging over the heads of those who had been 'dawdling,' and allowed their tally to run short. The character of the 'schoolmistress' was sometimes not even up to Macaulay's standard, and affords some curious recollections among those who in early life took their place in the dame school :—

"Our schoolroom was part of an old house with thatched roof and little diamond pane windows, cold brick floor, and capacious chimney corner. In cold weather, to economize fuel, part of the room was curtained off, and we were huddled together like chickens in a coop and kept each other warm with the least expenditure of fuel, while the old dame sat like an old witch on a raised part of the bricked floor, her feet upon the 'dick pot,' or tin kettle, containing ashes and live wood 'coal' for her special benefit, over which she dozed. From out of her many-frilled lace cap she would shriek at defaulters in the most extraordinary English ever heard in a 'school.'"

"Our schoolmistress had a mysterious corner cupboard in the room behind a curtain, to which she frequently resorted, but without improving her temper or faculty of teaching. Sometimes one of us would be specially favoured by being sent across the way with a bottle to the 'Fox and Duck,' and so were let into the secret of the corner cupboard."

"We never learned anything at our school except that we each had to read a verse of scripture before we left to go home, and the mistress, a violent-tempered woman, always beat us with the heavy yardstick with which she measured our work."

These are symbols of the 'schooling' that was possible for a great part of rural England during the first half of

the past century. In the town the state of things was not much better, and the competition for child labour produced most extraordinary results, when something in the nature of an education code and factory legislation first began to run counter to the habits of the people, in the mines, the factory, and at the forge. Two years after her Majesty's long and happy reign began, in 1839, inspectors of factories discovered some remarkable attempts at compromise between the habits of the people, the universal employment of child labour, the requirements of the Factory Act, and the demand for some degree of instruction being given to the children who were employed. The result of this compromise was that the inspector on visiting the factory found something very much like an "academy in a coal-hole," in which the grimy stoker turned teacher to the boys under his care at intervals for the purpose of complying with the law! A certificate had to be obtained and presented to the factory inspector, showing that the child employed had received two hours schooling on each of the preceding six days. As to the easy terms upon which these 'certificates' were granted, and the character of the instruction received, one of the inspectors wrote to this effect:—"It is not at all unusual to have certificates presented to me subscribed by the teachers with his or her mark! This generally happens in the case of female teachers I have had to reject the school voucher of the fireman [in the factories], the children having been schooled in the coal-hole (in one case I actually found them there), and having been made to say a lesson from books nearly as black as the fuel, in the interval between his feeding and stirring the fire of the engine boiler"!

It was not that this double shift of the stoker to turn teacher happened only at small workshops; the larger factories, where great wealth, in the form of capital, was employed and earned, were also at first not much better.

A few of the footprints along the way we have trod since that very small beginning, will serve to emphasize the contrast of the years. In the following return is given the percentage of persons married in England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, who signed the register by 'making their mark' during the period given below :—

	ENGLAND & WALES.		IRELAND.		SCOTLAND.	
	Men.	Women.	Men.	Women.	Men.	Women.
1841	32·7	48·9	—	—	—	—
1851	30·7	45·2	—	—	—	—
1861	24·6	34·7	—	—	10·6	21·3
1871	19·4	26·8	37·5	45·2	10·0	19·6
1881	13·5	17·7	26·1	30·7	7·1	13·9
1891	6·4	7·3	19·4	19·4	3·4	5·3

These figures are not only interesting as evidence of continual progress, but also for the comparisons they suggest. It will be seen that during the earlier decades covered by the foregoing returns, the brides who 'made their mark' on coming to the altar show a considerably higher percentage than the bridegrooms, but this disparity during the past thirty years has been gradually becoming less until the sexes are almost equal. Still more interesting is the comparison with Scotland, where the people in humble life have been a long way ahead of those in England and Wales in regard to education. Ireland still bears traces of that romantic miscellany of reading-books and crude appliances which the Commissioner found in use there. At any rate, the percentage of married couples who made their mark instead of signing their names is

about three times that of England and Wales and between four and five times that of Scotland, but it presents a curious coincidence of absolute equality of the classes in regard to that historic achievement of "Bill Stumps, his mark."

It is not generally in statistics that one looks for romance, yet in regard to the ratio between education and crime the most recent returns are very significant. In 1870, before the passing of the Elementary Education Act, we had only 1,693,559 children in schools; we had 135 prisons and 29,050 prisoners inside them. In 1899 we had 5,601,249 children in schools, and only 66 prisons and 17,637 prisoners, and when allowing for increase of population, the prisoners would have been 40,534 instead of 17,637. Put in another form, it appears that in 1870 the proportion of the population in schools was 1 in 15, and in prisons 1 in 853, while in 1899 the percentage in schools had risen to 1 in 6, and of those in prisons had diminished to 1 in 1,775. A more remarkable fact remains to be mentioned, namely, the large percentage of those in prison who are not able to read or write, or only imperfectly. It may be that the diminution of crime is due to other causes than education, and many persons would say that the spread of temperance helps to reduce criminal convictions, but, even so, there is still the question of how much temperance and other causes conducive to law-abiding citizenship themselves owe to education. From the academy in the coal-hole to the present system of education, with six or seven million children in school, is a long stride, though we have still some leeway to make up before we can take the worthy place in comparison with some other nations of the world which our progress in other directions would require of us.

As for 'higher education' in the better-class schools, the grammar schools and 'academies,' etc., where gentlemen's sons were educated, the lessons received in school were

often tempered by strange incidents out of school hours in striking contrast with school recreation to-day. This is how Hugh Miller, in "My Schools and School Masters," describes what happened in his own school life at Cromarty Grammar School :—

"The school, like almost all other grammar schools of the period in Scotland, had its yearly cock-fights, preceded by two holidays and a half, during which the boys occupied themselves in collecting and bringing up the cocks ; and such always was the array of fighting birds mustered on the occasion that the day of the festival from morning to night used to be spent in fighting out the battle. For weeks after it had passed, the school floor continued to retain its deeply stained blotches of blood, and the boys would be full of exciting narratives regarding the glories of the gallant birds who had continued to fight until their eyes had been pecked out, or who in the moment of victory had dropped dead in the middle of the cockpit."

We sometimes hear laments over the tendency to overdo athletics at our public schools and universities, but, at any rate, the recreation is not so degrading as it was in Hugh Miller's day.





CHAPTER XII.

ARCADY THESE HUNDRED YEARS.

I AM writing this chapter, as all accounts of Arcady should be written, from the point of view of the inner life of rural England as I have known it for more than fifty years, and as I have been privileged to learn of it from others who knew it before that time. It is, therefore, the voices of the old men and the old ways that are speaking and finding utterance in this chapter, in which every lay figure and every scrap of rural talk is but the counterpart of something remembered or recorded in real life.

You cannot take any very sympathetic retrospect of Arcady during these hundred years now past, without catching glimpses of solid and stolid virtues and characteristics, and of a whole battalion of ghosts of once familiar things now fading away out of sight and recognition. The toils and the trials of Arcady have been closely bound up with the life-history of these old receding forms and faces, and the man would be akin to Shakespeare's man without music in his soul who had not a tender feeling for the last of its kind—whether the last minstrel, the tinder-box, or his grandmother's pattens and red cloak. Some of these things have been ousted by new inventions, and some still linger and help to aggravate the worst problems of country

life to-day—problems which react upon the life of the crowded city, making its own huge social problems more acute.

The reaper with his sickle has gone, and the reaper and binder of the inventor has come to sweep the field; the bent back of the wheat barn 'tasker' is happily only a ghost, and the hard whacks of his flail on the polished wheat barn-floor only a memory which the buzzing of the 'sheen' is fast obliterating, and but few remember how the placid mind of Arcady was vexed about these apparitions of new-fangled, 'caticorned' things which seemed to be threatening its daily bread in the early years of the nineteenth century. Here is the burden of those early years of wonder and fear, echoed in the voices of Arcady:—

"I rec'lect very well, Reuben, what our old master said about that. I told him I 'ad heerd as 'ow they was a talkin' about threshin' o' wheat with a sheen, an' that I hoped it warn't a comin' true. He said — 'When cooaches run arount hosses m'y 'ap they'll thrash wheat arount a frail, John, but you m'd 'pend 'pon't that wunt be in your time nor mine. You'll hev to git another swinjel yet, John, I expect.' But it seems now as 'ow they're both comin' about, arter all; there was another fire last night, they say, above hills—Mast' Johnson's straw stacks as 'ad bin threshed with a sheen."

The man who said this was bent almost double, but was still faithfully forging ahead across the slippery threshing-floor, on spindle legs ending in tight-laced shoes, which kept out the dust, the chaff, and the flying kernels. He had, when this was spoken, almost outlived his generation, and had paid for his coffin—told the carpenter he had better have the money then, or "it might be spent on somethin' else"—and lived four years afterwards, when the carpenter discharged his part of the bargain, and the old man slept with his fathers between four honest elm boards.

It is a part of the sorrows of Arcady of a later day that through all the changing scenes of this wonderful hundred years, which have meant so much for the towns, the old homes of rural England remain, like the "Fox and Hounds"



"THE FOX AND HOUNDS," BARLEY, HERTS.

in the accompanying picture, almost unchanged, excepting that they are falling to decay beneath the weight of years, and no one cares to look to the root of the matter, beyond lamenting the lack of brightness in the rural homes, which,

it is confessed, helps to increase the modern pilgrimage from Arcady to Babylon. Yet there is something to be said for these old homes and the lives lived in them, to the credit of Arcady all through these hundred years.

When Mazzini so beautifully compared home to the "heart's fatherland," he must have been thinking of these homes of Arcady; of the humble thatched cottage and the singing of birds, to which the heart of John Howard Payne, in his sorrow, turned from the world's pleasures and palaces, as to the dearest spot on earth for the weary soul to find rest! Does the city man, who sees no horror in a flat or a furniture removal van, ever ask himself, as he flies along in express trains past our humble abodes, why the charm and the sentiment of home should have such a tenacious hold upon the people of Arcady, that philosopher and poet should come to us for their happiest definitions of life's little haven? Probably not; and it can only be understood by recalling the actions of men who sleep in forgotten graves, and whose arms are quite unknown to Heralds' College.

For generations we have struck our roots into the same soil; through many generations we have learned to cling to old spots, old homes, old forms, and old faces. The old armchair in which 'gramphther' sat by the hob, the old chest of drawers which 'gramther' dusted, may be worn in hollows, and a little wavy in outline, but the polish on them is the tender light of years of human contact which makes them a precious heritage compared with the smart drawing-room suite of doubtful ownership!

We who have grown old in Arcady do not transplant very kindly. Home, to the very last, is the centre of our life, and when we are fading away—and the 'token' comes in rappings or visions still heard or seen in remote parts of Arcady when the angel of death is abroad—"going home" is the last thing the neighbours say of us, as they go away, mumbling their sapient prophecy to the casual inquirer,

"'Pears to me he's agooin' home this time." What is the secret of this deep-rooted attachment to the homes of Arcady? It is not their luxury; it is not always for the comforts to be found there; but I suppose it is that here, more than anywhere else in the wide world, habit, like a kind old mother-nurse, has led us along her wonted pathways, until, even when the sorrows of Arcady are heavy upon us, the sight of the old familiar things becomes a consolation.

The cottage homes of England have been painted in fairest colours, with their porches sunwards, beneath a halo of honeysuckle and roses; but too often it is "distance that lends enchantment to the view." Seen from afar, there is often much in their favour. Some of them do face the sun, and beneath the pageant of Summer they glow with a mosaic of gillyflower, columbine, heartsease, jack'n'j-boxes, and clove pinks, framed in fat, green walls of kiss'n'y-corner, with woodbine overhead. But, if you look more closely beneath the mantle of Spring and Summer, about the roots, where fat cockles gather in thirsty colonies, waiting for the rain, or through the decay of Autumn, where mouldering leaves cover up the creeping things for their long Winter sleep, you may notice how very unsteady our 'grumpin' (groundpin) is becoming, and how the mud-plastered walls bulge beneath the weight of stodgy thatched roofs, in the cavernous hollows of which sparrows chirp a breezy defiance at our old custom of buying their heads by the dozen.

If on the outside of the cottage homes of Arcady there is beauty enough for a poet and idylls enough for a king, inside there are often problems enough to stagger a whole conference of social reformers. The life that is lived within their walls can never be of the drawing-room type; it is essentially homely, is not over-sensitive, and does without any buffers to break disagreeable contacts. It is sometimes morally depressing, perhaps, but has been, many times in

these hundred years, saved from sheer humdrum by alternations of joy and sorrow. At such times we are not given to making much 'to-do,' and perhaps our conduct might seem almost selfish to the merely polite person. We may not always have what the district visitor would call a 'nice' way of volunteering our help in time of need, but we mean very well; and if we are not demonstrative in our sympathy it is because nothing 'worrits' us so much as 'making a fuss.' Of course, there may be cowards in Arcady as elsewhere, but there are many who will stand stolidly to their guns, even unto death. Here is a little incident which comes to me from a hard-working doctor in one of our villages of to-day, which is worthy to place beside the heroism of our soldiers in South Africa:—

In one of the mud-walled homes, evolved from "wattle and dab," a whole family was stricken with typhoid fever. The visitation was so bad that, while outside help and gifts were not lacking, no one dared to venture under the roof where the kindly ministrations of nature were sorely needed, until a homely widow neighbour gave up her own home and stood by the fever-stricken family. Cut off from the outside world but for the doctor's visits, the good old soul did all that human strength could do for her heavy charge. The father and mother were carried off, and then the motherly nurse stood by the children, their only guardian, watching them hopefully as they passed out of the fire which had racked their little frames, into that sweet sleep, the ineffable calm after storm, which only the recovering fever patient knows. Then, one day, when the doctor came to look at the children, he found the brave woman, still at her post, it is true, but upon a bed by the side of her charge, in the grip of the fever herself! She was talking to the children in her delirium, and cheering them on with the promise of strong limbs and sunny days to come. But alas! the hopes of her dreams she was never to see! The good Samaritan was taken, and the children

whom she had succoured to the last were restored to health! Is there no Victoria Cross for Arcady? If there were, some of us would like to have had the honour of placing it upon the grave of this simple, dutiful woman, who, without the stimulus of drums and trumpets, went to her death alone with the enemy—and with God!

But the great, noisy world knows little of these silent tragedies, and, with all our trials, we obey the scriptural command to replenish the earth.

Because our homes have not improved during these hundred years, some hard things have been said about the squire, and the whip-hand he has over us in Arcady; but the worst homes of Arcady are not always those which belong to the squire. Very often the owner of the large estate is the first to rebuild his piece of Arcady upon some improved pattern. No, the very worst homes of Arcady are often those of the smaller men who live in the town, and often with very little real interest in them. In fact, the interest is almost 'the other way,' for there is too often somebody 'on the roof,' as we picture the mortgagee, and, what is as bad, there is—I had almost written the *curse* of—the copyholder, whose 'dead' but oppressive hand has taken its toll all through the centuries. Having no prospect of ever selling them to advantage for himself, the reputed owner goes on squeezing out his tally of rent with the least possible expenditure in plastering up walls and mending holes in roofs, knowing there is little chance of profit for him but by keeping up the crumbling walls. In many such cases our homes are worse now than a hundred years ago, and there seems no hope of improvement by ordinary means, and the disappearance of the unfit is left to the cruel process of cleansing, even as by fire!

If you run over old men's memories or parish papers, you will find that the great fires in Arcady have been its historic landmarks, in comparison with which the great battles of the world seem of small account and afar off.

Most of our old farm homesteads have been burnt down at least once in this hundred years, and though the cottage homes have escaped longer, their time has come in many a great disaster, casting a shadow over the dial of our lives, by which, like the black spot on the 'longshoreman's mental wreck chart, where the "Mary Ann" went down, the old Arcadian remembers some other things, and will tell you what o'clock it is down in Arcady.

"Well! I count I shall be seventy-one the very next Lammas as ever comes; an', 'twixt you an' me an' the gate pooast, I can tell ye for why! It'll be fifty year ago then sin' the great fire, when the Bury farm an' Larman's Row was burnt down—what a blizzy it war, to be sure!—an' I rec'lect hearing mother say as how I was one-and-twenty that very night. I baint no schollard, but I count one-and-twenty and fifty'll be seventy-one, as near as no odds."

So, even as by fire, the old homes of Arcady are disappearing, and we are covering up the scars of the old fire-fiend's footprints. But the process is cruelly slow, and some of us are tempted to ask, with all respect for our betters, if there is no conscience in the legislative machine, that will lift the poorest human life in Arcady to a higher level than a miserable heap of clay-bats, and sticks and straw, called property! It is a humiliating confession to make, that in this matter of housing the toilers of Arcady, the fire-fiend should be kinder than our present system of ownership in bringing about improvements.

Although the sanitary reformer of late years has gone flat against the experience of Arcady for ages, we are prepared to meet him to this extent, that for a farmyard to drain into a well "aint exactly as it should be"; but, then, so few of us have wells to drain into, that even this advanced idea is not of very general application. Over this question of the bare necessity of, and the right to get, a drop of water to drink, the new local authorities have sometimes

had a vexatious time of it, but our official machinery, despite well-meant applications of the legislative oilcan, still creaks with the rust of ages.

The way we look upon these things through our small official spectacles, and set about a remedy down in Arcady, no Londoner could possibly understand. We do not meet in our little Trafalgar Square or Hyde Park—on the village green or under the spreading chestnut-tree—to call the water company and other interested parties hard names. That would not be respectful. We are disposed to accept the inevitable, unless — unless the bacteria man comes round and sets to work relieving his official conscience by telling us, in a lot of hard names, that we are drinking water which is bad enough to set a whole epidemic of dreadful diseases afloat, and that we must find some other source of supply! Then we wake up a little, rub our eyes, and ask ourselves if it is really as bad as that! One of us complacently remarks that the people of Arcady have always drunk the same water as long as he can remember, that they are always healthy enough, and that there are people in Arcady who live to be a goodish deal older than anybody in London, with all the work of the ‘Board above,’ as we still reverently call the Local Government Board. Then having discharged *our* conscience by the virtue of ‘saving the rates,’ we ride home on Dobbin to the rhythm of Tennyson’s “Northern Farmer” :—

“Coom oop, propuppy, propuppy—that’s what I ’ears ’im saäy—
Propuppy, propuppy, propuppy—canter and canter awaäy.”

But if the mills above grind slowly, still, they grind, and when the cog-wheel comes round again to the same point at which we were pulled up before, we have another bad quarter of an hour. This time we actually set to work, put our clumsy pens to paper, and draw up plans, ‘after a fashion,’ but the fashion does not suit the ‘Board above,’ who insists that we shall employ some London man, or

some 'competent engineer,' which we do, with some fear and trembling about his fee! But there is a worse rod in pickle for us than his fee. His report and his plans are nothing short of a brand-new outfit of waterworks for Arcady, such as a London vestry might be proud of, and we only wish that our Arcadian pockets were as deep and as inexhaustible as his proposed well! We pay the man his fee, secretly wishing we could earn money at such a rate, and the Clerk ties up the costly document with a rather soiled piece of red tape—the only piece we have in Arcady—and we settle down for another revolution of the wheels of Whitehall, hoping in vain that there may be some *little wheel* that would *help* instead of *crushing* us! In fact, some of us who would really like to do something for Arcady, if we could, are gradually getting the idea into our heads that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the 'Board above'—without intending it, for we never say anything bad concerning our betters—is the greatest hindrance we have to the carrying out of improvements, for brightening our lives, *such as Arcady can compass*.

Another phase of our life—the right to send men to Parliament to make those much-needed little laws—is so entirely new that the 'wonderful century' has closed almost before we know where we are.

"Woss the good o' you an' me avooatin' to send a man to Parl'ment if he's acomin' back agin arout makin' it any better for us o' Saderdy night?"

"Well, I dunno. If he makes 'em brew beer from malt an' hops that'll be a feather in his cap, wunt it? It's more'n you'll git at the 'Duke's Head,' nowadays."

It was in this wise that Joe Primmatt and Ned Scripps, tired, dusty, and thirsty, with barley ales still in their ears and whiskers after a long day's 'sheenin,' summed up the first lesson given us in Arcady in the art of working out our own political salvation. It was a very small beginning, but remember that you are here on the bed-rock

of Arcady. Unhappily, our first lesson in politics came from rival teachers, each declaring that he was sowing wheat and that the other was sowing tares, and so there was nothing for it but to abide by the parable, and let them grow together until the harvest.

The politics of Arcady in the past, unless they have been woefully misunderstood, could not have impressed the philosopher very favourably. The picture of us which has found acceptance has been this—those of us above the £10 barrier at the hustings expressed our approval of a candidate, “his principles and that sort of thing,” by a slap of the breeches-pocket, in token of the solatium our votes must bring, and all of us below that barrier have from time immemorial tacitly voted by touching our hats—or, in Arcadian phrase, ‘made a bow’—to the parson and the squire, and humbly received the regulation dole which marked off our social status. It was a caricature, of course, but, like the typical nickname, there was enough of truth in it to make it stick to us. Taking that little bit of social strata as the background of our lives in Arcady, was it really surprising if, in the glamour of what the carpet-bag man told us was our emancipation day, when the Franchise came to us some fifteen years ago, we should have taken candidates and their figures of speech too literally for our own good, as well as that of the Parliament-man himself?

It was a homely trysting-place, too, at which we were asked to meet the man who wanted our votes. We have no public halls in Arcady such as those where men do congregate in the cities and towns; so we made ready the great wheat barn at the Bury Farm. Standing there in the darkness of Arcadian night, the great rickety building, with red light streaming through its hundred eyes—the chinks, holes, and crevices through which owls, bats, and swallows flitted, and rats and mice made highways when the mow was bursting the creaking boards with grain—

appeared like a phantom hall of the dead ages, suddenly aglow with a weird, unearthly light. Outside hung the November fog, like a blanket covering all the footprints along the narrow ways our fathers trod, up to the place where—

“Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.”

Inside, if all that was said be true, the “stale, forbidding ways of custom” were taking “the attraction of romance.”

The candidates showed us their new stock of picture politics—pictures of what Arcady ought to be; and, as some of us understood them, of what it *was* to be if *they* were sent to Parliament. They showed us pictures of how the liberties of England had been won in the days of old, and then they showed us pictures of the coming time—pictures in which we were always the first in the land to be considered. In one of these pictures there was, of course, standing out in bold relief against the dawn on the rising ground of our little hollow, that historic cow with aching udders, waiting to be drawn! The rich man said the picture was not one of his own painting, and the man with the carpet-bag would not go quite as far as to say that he painted it; but we understood that it was rather a favourite with both of them. Then there was the picture of our little homes, each standing in its spacious foreley, an old institution in Arcady, which sometimes gets badly nicknamed as somebody’s ‘folly.’ There was the picture, too, of one of us in his old age literally sitting under his own vine and fig-tree, with a comfortable pittance for the rest of his days, and the workhouse no longer casting its dark shadow at the end of the long lane. Yet we did not respond very readily, but made up our small shuffling audience by dropping in one by one, as curiosity overcame our shyness—so differently do impressions strike different minds when a new idea is born!

In one small centre in H——shire, in the 1885 campaign, when the villages were overrun with picture politics of the future yet to be, if only the right sort of men were sent to Parliament, there was given quite a revelation as to the force of old attachments to wonted pathways. In the small village schoolroom there was assembled what the party agent would call a good meeting. The parson was there, and had got his little flock around him, most of whom were new voters whose emancipation day had come. The would-be Member, a genial man, had delivered himself of his opinions on what Arcady should be ; his supporters had spoken, with less caution, of what it would be if only the candidate were returned ; the audience had listened fairly well, and the seed seemed to be falling on good ground ; the last speaker was on his legs, and had got half-way through some real ‘clenchers’ for the working-man to take home with him, respecting the rival claims of political promises and performances, when an old man in the room was seen tugging at a steel chain attached to the “ticker in his fob,” and then made a remark which certainly had greater effect on the audience than all the eloquence of the platform. At the old man’s words the audience rose as one man, and, without rudeness or intentional disrespect, filed past the speakers, touching their foretops respectfully as they left. They walked out of the room with the simple air of men who had a duty to perform, and to the astonishment of the platform, and especially of the speaker who was giving that clever blackboard lesson in politics ! What had he done ? Had he said anything to wound the sensitive nature of the new voters ? No, poor man ! Nothing he could have said would have been powerful enough for that, or to move them as the old man’s words had done !

The parson came to the rescue of the puzzled and now deserted speakers, and the explanation was simple and unanswerable. There was only one public-house in Arcady, and that one public-house closed at 10 o’clock ; when the

old man pulled out his watch it only wanted ten minutes to 10! What the old man said was simply, "Time for beer," and his fellow-electors realizing that, whatever might happen to Parliament and to "this great country," it was a case of now or never, and if they were going to have any beer that night it was time to go! And so every man of the future masters of England left the coming Member, his agent, and trusted speakers to their own reflections, while they, the "free and independent electors" of Arcady, went the way their fathers had gone, holding fast to their ancient creed that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. It was not a very promising beginning, but it was an instructive one, and the speakers learned more from it perhaps than the new electors had learned from their speeches.

But from the spoilt-child and the lollipop stage of politics, Arcady is slowly recovering. Slowly we are learning the lesson that politics, like education, should have a higher value than what they will bring for the trouble of going to the poll.

The hopes of Arcady, after a century's slow, upward movement towards the light, are, however, social and educational rather than political, as the following little transcript of a small beginning in actual life will show:—

"'Taint a question o' whether the money is to come out o' the Squire's pocket or the Parson's, or your'n or mine, Ben, it's a question o' princible! You m'd'pend 'pon't, this 'ere eddication'll be the ruin of old England! She's making a rod for her own back, as sure as your name's Ben Simmons! Astead o' larnin' a boo-y the natur' o' things an' how to work on a farm, you'll make him too lazy to work and too proud to beg; an' when he finds as writin' an' figurin' an' spellin' long words wunt buy beef an' a smart jackut, he'll be forgittin' the eighth commandment, m'y'ap!"

"But it is generally admitted that education is a very

good thing in itself ; besides, the Bishop is in favour of it," suggested the mild-mannered parson.

"Well ! then let the Bishop pay for't, for I tell you I'll be no party to't !" Placing his broad chip hat on his head at the old atribilious angle, Daniel Grim—farmer and churchwarden, weight nineteen stone, character obstinate, masterful, and contrary—walked out of the vestry with the air of a man who had resolved to leave the parish to its fate !

Daniel Grim, or Graham, for we have a way, down in Arcady, of making short cuts with our tongues, knew of no equivalent for education, you see, but that which could be expressed in turnips and the like, and it is fair to his memory, perhaps, to observe, that this was not far from the traditional beliefs of Arcady in his day. But in spite of this there came a change. One Winter the schoolmaster came and scattered a handful of seed in the night, and the boys left their favourite amusement of making silhouettes outside the window at the "Duke's Head" or at the village smithy, and were seen at the night school. The little seeds sprouted, and the new Squire offered a piece of ground and a subscription towards building and maintaining a school for Arcady. It was at this point that Daniel Grim, Arcady's sturdy breakwater against all new-fangled notions, resisted the inflowing tide by that emphatic speech at the vestry.

But the new school was built and Daniel Grim was gathered to his fathers, and, under the new conditions, Arcady went on watering the little tree of knowledge with more or less regularity, until the State took the watering-pot in hand and gave it a good 'sousing.'

Perhaps if the silence of history could be broken upon some of the smaller things which have made up country life during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the hopes of Arcady for the future would be found to spring from her patience during these years. It was a hard task they set us to do. When they told us that every boy and

girl in Arcady, before thinking of turnips and the like necessities, must be labelled "warranted to contain four standards," and that the policeman was standing at the corner to see to the packing of the standards and that the fragile cases did not explode, I am afraid that the shade of Daniel Grim was very perceptible in Arcady!

Seven hungry stomachs craving for turnips and the like ; one man's strong arm raking together eleven shillings a week, and with this only in his hand, standing between them and the strife ; called upon by all that was sacred to satisfy the craving of his own flesh and blood in one direction, and by all that was powerful to obey what seemed to be almost an opposite mandate in another ! Do the men and women who strut in fine purple and brocade upon the stage of life ever think that the truest heroisms are often the silent ones ? Do the millionaires and the doctrinaires ever think what that struggle between the lower and upward life has meant for Arcady ?—what it has often meant of silent, heroic sacrifice for a woman and of patient obedience for a man ?

"Well, John, it seems as they've got the power, an' it ain't much use for you an' me to say anything ; leastways, if we do, we can't help it, I expect." That has been for generations the final answer of Arcady to the things that must be endured. But we are beginning to see that there is a better reason, and that out of the sacrifice there is growing a happier heritage for the children. The school-master's tree is now one of sturdy, upward growth, and is already catching the sunlight on its topmost branches. We look up to its shining leaves in their sunny atmosphere, and compare them to the children, for—

"Through them we feel the glow
Of a brighter and sunnier climate
Than reaches the trunks below."

But will the children stay with us ? That is our most serious problem. The stream of tendency from Arcady

to Babylon is pulling 'powerful hard,' and thereby hangs a tale about the new leaf we have turned, the things 'technical' which we are preparing to write thereon, and the part which the legislature and our local authorities are going to do to keep us 'on the land' by giving us decent homes and little local schemes for meeting our common necessities.

We have left behind the farmer's boy of a hundred years ago in his leather breeches and fustian, innocent of reading and writing, and of all knowledge beyond his daily round—from stable to field, from field to stable, and then to the kitchen fire and to bed at the old farmhouse; we have left behind the same class of boy in smock frock, corduroy, and leather leggings, with his Sunday-school spelling-book, but still 'no schollard' beyond his daily round; and we have left behind the same class of boy who, with various results, got armed with pen and ink by The Elementary Education Act of 1870.

To-day we are putting our farm boys into smart jackets, while here and there one rides home from work on a bicycle, to the envy of all the rest, and we are defying Daniel Grim by actually offering scholarships for the cleverest amongst them! During the last twenty-five years we have sent many of our promising boys up 'in the smoke,' as we call it in Arcady, to help do the lifting and the figuring of London life, and at Bank Holiday time they come back amongst us and put on such superior airs that "you'd think they owned half o' Lunnon," as our old men say.

We have had our century of progress down in Arcady, as in the rest of the world, but some of the longish-headed ones amongst us are beginning to ask whether we—School Boards, local authorities, landowners, County Councils, and members of Parliament—are doing as much to keep our boys interested in doing the best they are capable of on the land as we are doing to induce them to get away from it.

By the use of the railway the country is getting to know the City, but the City, if it knows the country, does not always quite understand what kind of human watershed it is from which the stream of vigorous young life is ever running, with increasing volume, into the great mill-race of the Metropolis, and increasing its pressing social problems. The only sign of a reversal of this tendency seems likely to bring the labour back to the land in a different sense from that which is commonly urged.

Here and there, the factory man is coming out of crowded London and spanning, with his great iron sheds, wide stretches of cheap land near our little town centres for his 'works,' and takes some of our boys as apprentices. If things go on as at present, we shall only have to turn a handle to cultivate and garner the little land left us, and Arcady will hardly know itself in the new century just opening.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE ROMANCE OF OPPORTUNITY.

ALL through the later years of the century just closed we have learned how much the romance of opportunity now means for individuals, for families, for nations, and for the world. At the beginning of the century the men who carved their way to eminence by their own strong arm were few and far between; while the 'self-made' man, as the human product of the survival of the fittest is often called, was practically unknown. Now, captains of industry, merchant princes, and leaders of great movements have come, unfettered and free, up from the ranks of the toilers to seize that forelock of opportunity, and march in their God-given place in the van of human progress.

A century's unexampled expansion of trade has brought something of the romance of opportunity down to the breakfast table of the poor. The sense of contrast is crystallized in the old village general shop of the forties and earlier with its successor of to-day. Over the door of the old shop a notice-board intimated that Susan Brown was "licensed to sell tea, coffee, tobacco, snuff, and pepper," sometimes adding vinegar, and these and the regiments of tallow candles suspended from the ceiling inside, with sugar, treacle, bacon, and lard, made up almost the entire stock-in-trade. In the smart crowded window of the village shop of to-day you will see products of all climes, tinned, canned, and labelled—meat from South America, salmon from the Fraser River in the Great

North-West, rabbit from Australia, fruits from California—all available in a cheap, handy form, fit for the tables of the rich and within reach of the poor.

The Co-operative movement represents for the working classes in our manufacturing districts and large towns, something both of the romance of opportunity and of the rise of a great social factor from the day of small things. Beginning at Rochdale in 1844 "with a stock-in-trade which a jealous shopkeeper contemptuously declared he could carry away in a wheelbarrow," it has grown until that wheelbarrow load of goods has now become an annual turnover of nearly forty millions sterling!

The romance of opportunity is even more striking in regard to Savings Banks for the people. A hundred years ago the first Savings Bank in the United Kingdom was opened in the Parish Church Vestry of Wendover, Bucks, by the Rev. John Smith, rector of the parish. Ten or eleven years later a similar bank was opened by the parish minister of Ruthven, in Scotland. To-day the Post Office Savings Bank, advocated first by Mr. Charles Sikes, of Huddersfield, and officially adopted by Mr. Gladstone in 1861, shows, according to the Postmaster-General's report for 1900, the following colossal figures for the United Kingdom: 8,046,680 depositors, with £130,118,605 to their credit, and an average of £16 3s. 5d. for each depositor.

If Carlyle's saying be true, as it is to a very large extent to-day, that "The true university of these days is a collection of books," what a heritage of opportunity has indeed come to the very poorest in the land! "It is impossible for anybody to confer on young men a greater blessing than to stimulate them to associate themselves constantly with a Free Library." That was the opinion of John Bright, and you cannot fail to be struck with its force, and the immense field of opportunity opened up for the working-man and for the large number of young men and lads to be seen using our free libraries, not only in

'looking at the paper,' but revelling in the pleasures of high-class magazine literature, and the best books which otherwise would even now be out of their reach.

Fifty years ago Charles Dickens, Thackeray, and Bulwer Lytton were together on one platform, speaking at the opening of the first Free Library in England, that of Manchester. Dickens, in a happy turn of phrase, spoke of it as "the Manchester School—the great free school, bent on carrying instruction to the poorest hearths, inviting the humblest working-man to come in and be its student, knowing no sect, no party, no distinction, knowing but the public want and the public good." Thackeray, speaking on the same occasion, was greatly moved by the vista opened up of free libraries all over the land, and of the elevating influence of such an improvement. Since then, Thackeray's vision has become a reality in some hundreds of towns in the country, and the magnificent free libraries in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and other Midland counties are among the noblest of our institutions.

A free Press has opened all the avenues of life and the doors of the world which were closed to our grandfathers, and so rigidly closed that if in their poverty they could not afford to subscribe for a newspaper each, but borrowed from a neighbour who could afford to buy one, the law stepped in and claimed a heavy penalty for making one newspaper do duty for several persons, and thus defraud the Revenue of the stamp duty it placed upon the papers! In 1836, when every copy of a newspaper printed could be easily counted by the stamps issued for the 'tax on knowledge,' which every paper issued had to carry on the face of it, the number of newspapers turned out in this country was a little more than half a million a week. To-day we have single papers each issuing a larger number than this every morning; and from twenty to thirty million copies are probably issued every day for

the whole country, but exactly how many is beyond computation! A newspaper cost our grandfathers sixpence, and now it costs a halfpenny or a penny.

Even more bewildering than the mass of printed matter with which a cheap press is flooding the world, are the pictorial object-lessons of much that is wonderful in the world and beyond it, which have been made possible by photography and the rapidly executed process blocks for the illustration of magazines and even daily newspapers. Beyond these, a new world of object-lessons has been opened up by the now familiar magic-lantern. A lantern-slide maker has estimated that "this process of conveying instruction and amusement by pictures presents to the eye of the British public millions of pictures in a single season."

The romance of opportunity is equally striking in the contrast between the facilities of communication a hundred years ago and to-day. Here is a curious little domestic experience and geographical mistake of ninety-eight years ago, which seems incredible in our age of much travel. In the month of December, 1802, two young women living at Newcastle had the momentous experience of being invited to visit an uncle living at Peterborough. Not knowing where Peterborough was, except that it was a long way off, they made their way to Shields to inquire about a passage by sea! At Shields they showed their uncle's letter to a wharfinger, who, being as ignorant of geography as themselves, recommended them to the master of a ship just about to sail! The ship was really bound for St. Petersburg, but the difference in name was so slight that they went on board, were received as passengers, and in due time arrived safely at the Russian capital! The ship was soon afterwards chartered for another voyage, not back to Shields, but to Cork! "The circumstances of their situation were now become ludicrous and distressing. At last the captain of a Hull ship generously admitted them as passengers for that port, where they arrived, and

through the further benevolent attentions of this gentleman, were forwarded by coach to Peterborough"!

With the above may be coupled this bit of the romance of opportunity at the seaside: "I think it is scarcely realized by the present generation how modern seaside watering-places actually are," says Mr. Broderick in his "Memories." "My first sight of the sea was at the village of old Hunstanton, the only seaside watering-place, if it could be called so, within easy reach of Castle Rising. Here there was but one regular lodging-house, the property of a Lynn clergyman, and the accommodation was so primitive and scanty that one of us children was reported to have been put to bed in a chest of drawers!"

If you look beyond the boundaries of the land and sea, the contrast is equally romantic. The passenger who now lounges in the great ocean hotels, the Atlantic liners by which, in from five to six days, he gets landed at Liverpool or New York almost with the punctuality of an express train, will hardly understand the full meaning of this little log record for 1819:—

"Jan. 1st.—Five days since I came on board the 'Ruthby,' then lying in and now creeping down the Thames. . . . Sunday, 3rd, under weigh, but soon stranded, struck and stuck fast on the shallow sands above Margate Roads. . . . 4th, safely anchored in the Downs off Deal; boarded by smugglers offering best Hollands at 14s. and 12s. 6d. per gallon, which they keep sunk in the sea. The captain traded and thereby saved 100 per cent. 6th, under weigh. 7th, continued 36 hours in bed with little sleep, drinking neat Hollands and eating biscuit only, so avoiding sea-sickness, though morally sick at heart! 8th, visited the steerage, a hole unfit for either man or beast! 11th, anchored off Ryde, gale continues. 25th, still in Portsmouth Harbour. 27th, to dinner at the Cornish Arms, Portsmouth, the landlord of which always presides at the table and toasts Bonaparte by saying aloud—"God bless Bonaparte, the man of the

people, the Frenchman's hope, and the glory of the world ! ' 26th, weighed anchor. 30th, off Plymouth, but no land in view ! To my sorrow is it known that the Captain finds his beef and porter good for nothing, the former having been a voyage to the East Indies ! Feb. 2nd, dead calm. 4th, bad weather, wind right ahead. 9th, no fire in the cabin ; so cold I am compelled to wear two pairs of hose. March 2nd, our brutal captain beat and bruised the poor steward. 14th, wind dead ahead ; the sad seventy-eighth day from the port of London. 27th, now only 440 miles from Boston. April 2nd, land O ! "

The above little summary is the actual recorded experience of an English passenger to America in 1819, the voyage lasting more than three months ! Against these striking examples of the narrow horizon within which our fathers lived, and the difficulties of getting beyond it, may be placed this fact of the year 1900 : The great Paris Exhibition, which has just closed, was visited by fifty millions of people, from mechanics to millionaires, many of them from distant parts of the world, and most of them from farther away than from Newcastle to Peterborough.

Little children of the poor in the early years of the century could only look and wonder at the great bending blue roof of the world, never hoping to get even to the dozen-mile limit where the earth and sky appeared to meet, upon the first rising ground outside the little hollow in which their homes were, to them, the centre of the world. But to the children of to-day the horizon has widened out, and distant places have been brought near, until the very poorest have got beyond that illusory meeting of the earth and sky, and may gaze upon and revel in the glories of the boundless sea.

Quite a chapter of romance of opportunity is contained in that little business of getting on wheels, to which our young people owe so much of the privilege of seeing the world all about them. Take your stand in imagination

with that gossiping rustic group, there by the overhanging chestnut-trees and the horsepond, at the entrance to our village, away back on a Summer's evening in the forties or fifties. They are there to witness, if fate should so ordain it, the return of David —— "back from Lunnon on his shindrum." David was a longish-headed chap, and had a knack of "making things out of his own head," as the neighbours would say, and for weeks it had been known that he was working at his carpenter's bench building a strange-looking thing on wheels, which, when it was finished and ready for the great trial trip, Arcady, with its wonderful aptitude for finding home-made names, by common consent called a 'shindrum.'

That rustic group was hotly debating the possibility of David's self-appointed task of riding to "Lunnon an' back in a day," by way of a trial of his new 'shindrum.' He had started off very early in the morning, and as the shades of evening were gathering the excitement was tremendous, and some of the more impatient ones could not wait, but ran "on in front" as far as the toll-gate at the four-wont way to catch a glimpse of David. There were wisecracks in the crowd who, while not questioning David's workmanship, for no one in Arcady could do that, gave signs of their being a little 'dubersome' whether the 'shindrum' might not, like the Deacon's wonderful 'one-hoss-shay,' come to a sudden termination of its career, on the principle that "You can't expect a man to do that as is impossible." There was no actual betting—we were not advanced enough for that—but I believe there was a mild sort of wager that depended upon David's return. At any rate, it was sufficient that David had in a sense wagered his invention against public credulity, in putting it to so severe a test as riding it sixty miles a day. When, therefore, the 'shindrum,' a strange 'contraption' chiefly of wood, cranks, and wheels, in appearance a cross between a farmer's clumsy seed-corn drill and an antique

tricycle—when the ‘shindrum’ hove in sight, with David still sitting triumphantly on his wooden seat, with a little crowd of followers running behind him, Arcady went wild with delight. Young men said, “I told you David ’ud do it,” and older men said, “Well I never! That beats ole Mother Shipton!” The boys crowded round the wooden, cranky steed when David pulled up at the horsepond, hard by the old workshop in which many thoughtful days and nights had been devoted to his great achievement.

Now, when crowds of cyclists ride through the same village, and dismount from shining wheels on the open front of the inn—on the site of the old horsepond long since filled in—the young cease to wonder, for have not they, too, at least their ‘boneshaker’? Here and there an old man will remember the ‘shindrum,’ and sapiently remark that “they’d never ’a done it if it ha’nt bin for David.” When it is said that “in Coventry and other places thereabouts numbers of children go to school upon their cycles, and that in many of the Board Schools sheds are provided for the housing of the machines,” one sees what a vast stride opportunity is carrying the children compared with fifty years ago, when there were neither cycles nor, very often, schools to which they could ride.

The romance of opportunity is not, however, confined to individuals or to the family, but is spreading over the nations. Great achievements in the past, by which a particular nation excelled all the rest, were limited to the areas which gave them birth, and the secret of the giant strength which reared the Pyramids perished with the downfall of the ancient civilizations. To-day, every fresh advance in the field of knowledge immediately becomes accessible to the whole world, and all nations reap the benefit who do not deliberately shut out the light. The younger the nations the greater the share in the world’s progress, for they are in the first blush of the morning of the world of social order. In this way our Colonies—

unfettered by the dead hand of vested interests—are able to move with every fresh advance along the line of social progress, and revel in the newness of life which the reign of opportunity showers upon them ! It is this first choice in the field of opportunity, and a free hand to apply that choice to the development of almost unbounded natural resources, which have given to the United States of America the lead she now enjoys in the domain of invention, and the extent to which she has taken advantage of her opportunities forms one of the most romantic chapters in the progress of the nineteenth century.





CHAPTER XIV.

THEN AND NOW—CONCLUSION.

THE element of contrast in the hundred years now closed is summed up in the things which our fathers had to do without and the things which their children now enjoy ; in the servile conditions under which men toiled then and the greater freedom of the worker to go to his labour and live his life to-day. The horrors of child-labour of a hundred years ago, and even down to the forties and fifties, seem almost incredible. After the Chimney Sweepers' Act of 1842 was passed, the horrible practice of sending little boys up chimneys was continued for some time here and there in defiance of the law. In 1843, a Cambridge master-sweep was convicted of sending a little boy only 6 years of age up a chimney, from which the poor little boy fell and broke his arm !

In the colliery districts old men still remember not only going "dahn t' pit" at the age of 6, but also having seen "their little girls of 8 and 10 years of age sent down into the darkness of the coal-pits to work with a chain round the waist for ten or twelve hours." The reward of daily toil a hundred years ago was daily bread at about four times the price of it in 1900. The few opportunities for breaking away from this hard and depressing life were not very cheering, for the amusements of the young people were as degrading as their toil was hard, as the following extract from an old newspaper will show :—

"On the 5th of November, 1801, as I entered the town of Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk, my horse was startled by the shouts of a mob who were indulging themselves in the inhuman amusement of bull-baiting in a spacious square near the playhouse. The poor animal had been privately baited in the morning and goaded with sharp instruments in order to render him furious enough for public exhibition, which he afterwards experienced, tied down with ropes, baited by dogs, and gored by brutes in the shape of men, till in his agony and rage he burst from his tormentors, to the great danger of the peaceful inhabitants, some of whom were obliged to shut up their shops. After this the poor beast was entangled again with ropes, and, monstrous to relate, his hoofs were cut off, and he had to defend himself with his mangled, bleeding stumps! The Aldermen of the borough had tried to prevent it, but the demons are sanctioned by Act of Parliament."

In the same year a similar scene was enacted in the city of Chester, and at Beverley in Yorkshire "they forced the tortured beast triumphantly through the streets, bellowing with anguish and covered with blood." In the following year this pastime was warmly defended in Parliament; Mr. Courtney of that day declared it to be "a glorious sight; it animated the British heart." General Gascoyne considered it to be "an amusement which the lower orders were entitled to." After this classical championship of the sport, no wonder the Bill for its abolition was thrown out—by 64 to 51—and that it was not until 1835 that the sport became illegal. As for cock-fighting, that often meant money, and was a sport for gentlemen even more than for the 'lower orders.'

From the 'first gentleman in Europe,' as that patron of prize-fighters, George IV, was nicknamed, down to the stable-boy at the old coaching inn, the 'noble art of self-defence' was regarded as a 'prodigiously fine' sport. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century people would

gather in their thousands from all the country-side to witness a 'set-to,' not for 'self-defence,' but to see which of two men, for money and for bets upon their endurance, would be mauled almost and sometimes quite to death by the other, while representatives of the law looked on or connived at the exhibition. Downward the infection spread, until every village feast passed under the reign of the bully, and invariably ended in a free fight.

The scenes at executions a hundred years ago and later were indescribably revolting. Forty thousand persons assembled at the execution of three noted criminals—Holloway, Haggerton, and Elizabeth Godfrey—in London in 1807. Holloway, bowing to right and left to the vast crowd, theatrically declaimed—"Innocent! Innocent, gentlemen! No verdict! No verdict! Innocent, by God!" Thirty-five persons were trampled to death or lost their lives by suffocation in the crush.

The number of small crimes for which capital punishment was assigned was so great that the sentence was often inflicted *pro forma* in some cases, and allowed the victim to remain in harrowing uncertainty in others. In an Old Bailey trial of a woman for a trivial offence, the victim was so terrified at seeing the judge put on the black cap and hearing the dread sentence, that "the scene was distressing to witness," and even the humane side of the judge was touched, and he came to her rescue with this curious comment upon his own sentence—"Will no one tell the poor woman that she will not be hanged"!

To the indignities of law were added the brutalities of custom. The *felo de se* was buried at four cross roads with a stake through his body—an Irishman was buried thus in Cannon Street, London—and the detention of a body by creditors was occasionally witnessed, as in the case of John Elliott, of Shoreditch, whose body was carried off by a carpenter and bricklayer to whom he owed a small debt, for which act the son recovered £200 damages.

Malefactors were hung in chains after execution near the scene of their crimes, and men were put in the pillory as late as 1816, when it ceased except for perjury, for which the pillory continued until 1830.

As late as the year 1826, a State Lottery was being advertised by an odd-looking vehicle covered with placards and drawn through Holborn and the principal streets of London.

The dominant note of these hundred years has been the awakening of the public conscience to the scandal of old abuses, and the raising of the whole tone of our national life. In regard to slavery, it means that the "two million slaves formerly carried in English ships" are now none at all. Much more than this has been accomplished, and the prayer has been answered in Dr. Livingstone's last words, when battling to his death with African slavery, which are now recorded in his epitaph in Westminster Abbey: "All I can say in my solitude is, may Heaven's rich blessing come down on everyone—American, British, or Turk—who will help to heal this open sore of the world!"

Here is another item in the awakening which must be placed to the credit of the century. It has been estimated that in the United Kingdom 52,000,000 scholars have passed through our Sunday Schools; 190,000 waifs and strays and neglected or deserted children have been rescued and trained as useful citizens, the total cost for the young people being in these ways £52,000,000. On Foreign Missions we have spent over £50,000,000, and in hospitals £33,000,000, by which 66,000,000 persons have benefited as in- and out-patients, and by far the larger part of these patients at institutions founded during the century.

The advancement of medical science, and especially in surgical skill and appliances, has been so remarkable that the number, variety, and delicacy of operations now possible for the alleviation of human suffering have been very well described by an eminent writer as "little short of miraculous" compared with the crude methods which

could be applied to only a few types of disease a hundred years ago. Scarcely less remarkable has been the change of view as to the operation of cause and effect in regard to the public health. A hundred years ago all infectious diseases were regarded as a kind of fate, which if they came could not be escaped. Now we see in them simply the approach of an invading army which must be fought *secundum artem*—cut off from their recruiting-ground, besieged where they settle down, starved out and defeated by strategy, just as an army of soldiers fights; and that the public are beginning to see this as well as medical and scientific men is one of the most remarkable changes affecting social and public life.

In all that concerns the humanities, especially in regard to human suffering, we are living in a different world from that of 1800. The 'lady of the lamp,' who walked the foetid hospital wards of Scutari in the bitter harvest of death which followed the Crimean War, has softened the whole tone and temper of our attitude to the maimed, the sick, and the diseased, until the name of Florence Nightingale stands at the head of a noble band of many thousands of women nurses, highly trained for the tender crusade of those whose mission is to save.

It must be a source of regret that a century whose greatest triumphs have been those of peace should have closed with this country at war, yet the horrors of war have not now quite the bitterness of the old conflicts of a hundred years ago. Then war meant one long-drawn "palsy of the mind" and exhaustion of the body of the nation, and privations of the people at home which made them forget, even if they had the means of learning, the sufferings of the soldiers on the battlefield. Now, in the last year of the century, it has been possible to carry on a great war, to leave the breakfast table of the people at home practically untouched, and to see a vast fund of charity set in motion to care for the soldier, his wife,

and his family, to a degree which has never been experienced before.

Side by side with the fortunes of war has come once more the lesson that peace also has her victories. In the great expansion of our Colonial Empire we have seen in the last days of the 'wonderful century' the crowning point of a great federation of States whose birth was rocked in the cradle of romance. A hundred years ago a handful of convicts, banished from these shores for comparatively small crimes by the heartless old penal laws of England, were digging on the coast of the vast unknown continent fringed by Botany Bay, at a spot called Sydney Cove, where the capital of New South Wales is now filling up the picture of a magnificent harbour famous all the world over. Against that handful of convicts digging unconsciously the foundations of a new empire, another scene is about to be enacted by the Duke and Duchess of York—the future King and Queen of England—in the opening of the great Parliament of the Federated States of Australia. As for the empire, it has grown beyond all comprehension—eleven or twelve million square miles and four hundred millions of population.

"How marvellous it all is! Built not by saints or angels, but the work of men's hands; cemented with men's honest blood and with a world of tears; welded by the best brains of centuries past, not without the taint and reproach incidental to all human work, but constructed on the whole with pure and splendid purpose . . . Growing as trees grow while others slept; fed by the faults of others as well as by the character of our fathers; reaching with the ripple of a resistless tide over tracks and islands and continents, until our little Britain woke up to find herself the foster-mother of nations and the source of united empires."

So spoke Lord Rosebery on "Questions of Empire" to the University Students of Glasgow recently, and the

unity as well as the dimensions of our expanding empire has never been more marked than it is to-day. When those first settlers went out to Botany Bay they sailed in a little fleet of 500-ton ships, and were from six to eight months on the perilous voyage. Now the royal representatives of the Mother of Parliaments will go out on a palatial steamship and in a fraction of the time.

Few things are more striking in the contrasts of a hundred years of our national life than the growth, side by side with the power of the people, of their devotion to the Throne and Constitution. A hundred years ago the people of England were being dragooned into loyalty by mercenaries who denounced all popular movements as sedition; now the stability of the Throne is assured by an enfranchised people. In the Jubilee of George III, in the year 1809, despite some illuminations and festivities, the burden of the times sat so heavily upon the people that the demonstrations were largely of an official character, in striking contrast with the memorable scene and spontaneous enthusiasm when Her Majesty Queen Victoria in 1887, and again at the greater jubilee, after sixty years reign, in 1897, came amongst her people, with all the pomp of state, yet backed up by the acclamations of a great and loyal empire.

Whether war will ever cease among men may be doubtful, but there has been a remarkable raising of the standard of international courtesy. Our caricatures are infinitely less offensive to other nations than those of a hundred years ago, and nobody now defends the stupid insularity which dictated the second verse of our National Anthem, conceived when John Bull regarded everybody else as his natural enemies. In a similar way it is doubtful whether a theological millennium will ever come, when men will subscribe to one creed; it is not possible that it should be so with our limited capacity of seeing but one or two rays in the sevenfold rainbow light of the sum-total of

truth. At the same time, we have lost much of the bitterness which prevailed until railway trains, a free Press, and national education cut down the hedgerows, let in the light, and enabled men to see each other face to face, and to recognize how much larger is the common ground on which we stand than can be compassed within the narrow boundaries of the creeds.

We have yet to learn, perhaps, that these manifestations of progress, from the domestic hearth to the expansion of empire, are but the outward shell of things, and that their real effective life and permanence must be found in the character of the men who work the machine, and in the opportunities for good and the checks of evil which that machinery will secure. Is our boasted advancement and expansion at all balanced by these considerations? In the amusements of the people there has been an enormous advance in leaving old degradations and brutalities behind, but there are subtle changes at work which do not make for the betterment of the race. Twenty thousand active young fellows out of factories and mills yelling themselves hoarse over, and betting on the result of, a machine-made system of professional football, instead of strengthening their muscles and sinews for the coming race by playing the game themselves for its own sake—this is what we are drifting into in sport. In the streets our youths and even boys are becoming slaves to the cigarette, and our girls, despite a few brilliant exceptions and all the opportunities for their higher education, are yielding to the seductive habit of reading nothing but doubtful fiction, much of it steeped in the brutal lie of depicting life as everywhere stained with murder and shame, and at best but a glorified police court.

Our penal code, though gentle and considerate as a policeman at a London crossing, catches the criminal of the streets, but still allows more subtle forms of crime to flourish like a green bay-tree, until the company promoter

is allowed to do that in the name of a syndicate which would send him to Pentonville as an individual. With all our hospitals and charities, Midas is still king, and money-making and the pleasure of spending it are all-powerful. Great industries built up by men of character and conviction are being absorbed into a soulless automaton of companies and dividends for investors. With the better part of our cheap Press still incomparably good, there is no inconsiderable part distinctly on the down grade, fostering a spirit of gambling in its most seductive forms ; and, with the loss of reverence, of personal conviction, and the power of saying 'no' which sustained our fathers, all these tendencies are not without a certain significance as to what the new century shall be.

That the trade of the British Empire, in which we glory, is now five times what it was when the Queen came to the Throne, is a remarkable fact, but we are being called upon to learn, as we never have been before, that other great Continental nations are everywhere competing, frequently with better appliances for education, and that if our favoured position and commercial supremacy are to be permanent, we shall have to strain every nerve to hold the advantage gained by the exertions of others.

In all the relations of life we have, as Lord Rosebery said about our Empire, a greater need than ever of men—men who can not only row down-stream where the tide is running fast, but who can pull the other way. "The people's century," as Mr. Hall Caine, the novelist, has happily described the century that has just closed, has brought our young people a splendid heritage, but whether the new century will be the "century of humanity," as he claims for it, must depend, not upon the resources of our civilization or inventions, but upon the character of individual men and women ; and the degree to which they allow themselves to become the mere slaves of machinery

and the palliatives of existence, is a present-day element of no small import.

Through the gathering twilight, mellowed by the distant after-glow where the century's sun has set, the old and the young are gazing, with far different eyes, as in the dual rays of the dissolving view, upon the shadows of the picture that is disappearing and the outline of the picture that is to be. To the aged, who have borne the burden of a large part of the hundred years now ended, it is the light at eventide, and the sense of infinite comfort that the strife of a hundred years has very largely died away, "as sinks the gale when storms are o'er." To the young, whose gaze is ever on the picture yet to be, the twilight of the hour is not that of setting suns, but the twilight of the morning, fresh with the stimulus of hope and dreams of high endeavour. Will the picture they see in shadowy outline be a reality or a mirage? The answer depends upon themselves more now than at any time during the past fifty years. A subtle tendency to relaxation is abroad, but they cannot afford to relinquish the oar by which their fathers' sweat and toil have brought them into a pleasant haven. In the century now opening the conflict will be on the open seas of life, and the race will be to the swift and the strong. The higher altitudes disclosed by the coming picture can only be reached by the young folks who live the strenuous life, and, keeping step to the music their fathers have set, march on towards the unknown future in the spirit of Walt Whitman's magnificent ode to the Western men—

"See my children, resolute children,
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or falter,
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us urging,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!"



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